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The United States Marines

In Nicaragua

by

Bernard C. Nalty

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Preface

This pamphlet is a concise narrative of the role of the U. S. Marines in the American interventions in Nicaragua during the period 1910-1933. The chronicle was compiled from official records and appropriate historical works and is published to give a further understanding of Marine participation in counterinsurgency warfare during the second two decades of the 20th century.

R. G. OWENS, JR.
Brigadier General, U. S. Marine Corps
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3

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U. S. MARINES IN NICARAGUA
UNITED STATES
NORFOLK
SAN DIEGO
MEXICO
PACIFIC OCEAN
CARIBBEAN SEA
NICARAGUA
CABO GRACIAS A DIOS
HONDURAS
COCO R.
SANSANG
HUASPUC
SACLIN
MOSQUITO COAST
BOCAY
HUASPUC R.
Puerto Cabezas
(BRAGMAN'S BLUFF)
SAN PEDRO PIS PIS
BOCAY R.
BAMBANA R.
OCOTAL
Jicaro
QUILALI
LA LUZ
Condega
PRINZAPOLCA
Somotillo
El Sauce
JINOTEGA
Rio Grande
MATAGALPA
RIO GRANDE
NICARAGUA
CHINANDEGA
Corinto
LEON
La Paz
MANAGUA
GRANADA
Rama
ESCONDIDO R.
EL BLUFF
BLUEFIELDS
MASAYA
LAKE NICARAGUA
PACIFIC OCEAN
SAN JUAN DEL SUR
SAN JUAN DEL NORTE
(GREYTOWN)
SAN JUAN R.
COSTA RICA
P. R. BREWER

THE UNITED STATES MARINES IN NICARAGUA

By

Bernard C. Nalty

Early Days of Nicaragua

Long before the coming of the Leathernecks, Nicaragua had been a prize fought for by world powers. In the year 1687, though all of Central America lay under Spanish claims, Great Britain made a treaty with an Indian chieftain and designated the man to be King of the Mosquito Protectorate (a strip of swamp land stretching along the east coast from Cape Gracias a'Dios to Bluefields Lagoon).

Spanish authority over Central America ended on 1 July 1821, when representatives from the provinces of Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, and Costa Rica met at Guatemala City to issue a declaration of independence. Plagued by revolutions throughout South America, Spain did not have the resources to challenge the rebels at Guatemala City. Free from the rigors of war, the rebels devoted their entire energies to forming a confederation modeled after the federal government of the United States. Within two years after the declaration of independence from Spain, a Central American Republic was exercising some degree of control over the five states.

Unfortunately, there were several stumbling blocks in the path toward stable government. Poor roads, exaggerated local pride, and the conflict between anticlerical Liberals and the staunchly Catholic Conservatives combined to destroy the union. For a time, the Liberals were able to retain power, but by 1839, the republic had disappeared, leaving Nicaragua an independent state.(1)

Nicaragua suffered the same ills which had proved fatal to the Central American Republic. Liberal still battled Conservative, but the hatred of one for the other was based on economic factors and civic pride rather than upon any religious principles. Whether a Liberal or a Conservative, the Nicaraguan had an abiding distrust of the national government.

To attribute the continuing strife within Nicaragua to economic differences or to the hatred of politicians out of power for those controlling the nation would be to ignore the spirit of localismo. This was a fierce civic pride, which magnified economic jealousy and enabled petty leaders to raise armies to crush a rival town or overthrow the national government. Over the years, of course, such rivalry waned until the principal motive for rebellion became the hatred of the "outs" for the "ins." Nevertheless, localismo was for many decades the main cause of warfare between Conservatives and Liberals.(2) Since compromise was impossible, the rival factions went to war, and for years, Nicaragua trembled under the lash of rebellion.

During these years of turmoil, Nicaragua blossomed forth as a strategically important area. As a result of the victory over Mexico, the United States had annexed California and the Southwest. Since the trek across desert and mountains to the Pacific Coast was both long and dangerous and the sea journey around Cape Horn was no easier, Nicaragua and the Isthmus of Panama became vital to America's transcontinental communications.(3) American diplomats successfully obtained transit rights across the isthmus.(4) In the meantime, gold had been discovered in California, and the increased traffic across Central America lured private investors into the area.

Leader in the development of a Nicaraguan transit route was an American, Cornelius Vanderbilt, who already had begun a rail line across the Isthmus of Panama. At first, Vanderbilt and his partners, Joseph L. White and Nathaniel J. Wolfe, had hoped to construct an inter-oceanic canal; but when this proved impracticable, they organized the Accessory Transit Company to transport freight and passengers from Greytown up the San Juan River, across Lake Nicaragua, then overland to San Juan del Sur.(5)

American expansion and the increasing importance of Nicaragua had not gone unnoticed in Great Britain. With a firm foothold north of Bluefields Lagoon, it was a simple matter to expand the Mosquito Protectorate. Once Mexico was beaten and the United States was certain to retain California, the British, in February 1848, seized the town of San Juan del Norte, renamed it Greytown and declared it a free city, made independent by the authority of the Mosquito King. The annexation of Greytown placed the British in control of the mouth of the San Juan River. Commodore Vanderbilt obtained permission to establish the Accessory Transit Company from the Nicaraguan government, but now his use of the river was subject to the whims of the British Consul at Greytown.

During the 1850's, then, Nicaragua was rocked by two conflicts, the shooting war between Liberals and Conservatives and a war of nerves between the United States and Britain. Anglo-American troubles began in 1851, when the municipality of Greytown attempted to gain closer control over Vanderbilt's company by forcing it to move its stores nearer the heart of the city. The company naturally refused. A mob then rowed out from Greytown, did some damage to Vanderbilt's warehouses and offices and trampled on the American flag.

Again in February 1853, the British tried to disrupt the transit service. Local company representatives refused to obey an order that they raze their new buildings at Puntas Arenas. Fortunately, an American warship, the Cyane, dropped anchor in the harbor; and on 11 March, Orderly Sergeant James Thompson landed with a detachment of Marines to guard American property in and near Greytown. This handful of Leathernecks plus the ominous guns of the Cyane prevented any repetition of the mob's outrage of two years before. On 13 March, the Marines were withdrawn.

Relations between the British consul at Greytown and officials of the transit company remained tense. On 16 May, the river steamer Routh carrying Solon Borland, the American Minister to Nicaragua, chugged to a stop off Puntas Arenas. That evening, Borland went ashore to visit the American commercial agent in Greytown. A mob surrounded the agent's house, hurled broken bottles and stones at the Minister, and kept him a virtual prisoner for some 48 hours. Once the mob had dispersed, Borland began the long journey to Washington, where he reported the details of the outrage to the Secretary of State. Upon learning the facts, the United States immediately demanded the punishment of those responsible; but there was no one left at Greytown to assume responsibility for the riot. Every member of the municipal council as well as the mayor had either resigned or fled to Jamaica. Since there could be no recourse to diplomacy, the problem was handed over to the United States Navy.

Charged with the task of exacting satisfaction was the captain of the Cyane, Commander George H. Hollins. Commander Hollins faced a difficult decision. He realized that he could extract no apology for the attack on Minister Borland. His only alternative was to punish the men responsible, but the ringleaders had disappeared. All he could do was bombard the town, and this he tried to do in the most humane manner possible. Hollins allowed 24 hours in which to evacuate the town, then commenced firing. Beginning at 0900 on 13 July, 177 shells plowed into Greytown. That afternoon a landing party of Marines and seamen completed the destruction of the town and on the following day, crossed over to Puntas Arenas to demolish a powder magazine.

In the meantime, Nicaragua was in the midst of another series of rebellions. Conservative victory in the election of 1853 brought the usual reaction--a rebellion of the Liberals. For a time, government troops were successful; and Francisco Castellon, defeated Liberal candidate for President, was exiled to Honduras. There he won the support of the Honduran government and re-entered the fray. In spite of this assistance, the Liberals were unable to win a conclusive victory, so Castellon began looking further afield for reinforcements.

The Liberal campaign was dragging on when Castellon poured out his troubles to a visiting Californian, Byron Cole, who offered an easy solution to the problem. Cole contacted his close friend, a diminutive native of Tennessee, William Walker. In return for cash and land grants, Walker offered to provide 300 "colonists subject to military duty" for service in the Liberal army.

William Walker was no novice at dabbling in revolution. Earlier in his career, he had organized a private army and invaded Lower California. Disease, starvation, and the lack of support by the natives combined to defeat him; but he escaped to California ready to embark on some new adventure.(6)

In the summer of 1855, Walker arrived in Nicaragua with the first contingent of "colonists." The fighting that followed was directed almost exclusively by the tiny American. A truce was granted, and in October 1855, a new Liberal government took office. Patrico Rivas, a moderate Conservative, took office as President, a move designed to appease the opposition, while Walker looked out for the Liberal cause as Commander in Chief of the Army.

In February 1856, Walker forced Rivas to revoke the charter of the Accessory Transit Company and turn over its rights to a new concern. Cornelius Vanderbilt vowed revenge.

Walker seemed eager to lead Nicaragua out of the wilderness, an objective he could best accomplish as chief executive. Pride in his adopted country, personal ambition, and his own greed caused Walker to bolt the Liberal party, accept nomination by the Conservatives, and become the only American to hold office as President of Nicaragua.

Although President Franklin Pierce extended diplomatic recognition to the new government, the Walker regime was tottering. Cornelius Vanderbilt employed his ships to run guns and men to the Liberals; and the British, concerned over the fate of the Mosquito Protectorate, rendered aid to the rebels. Cruelly adhering to a scorched earth policy, Walker destroyed even the city of Granada; but his cause proved hopeless. The British evacuated most of his troops, while Walker himself, on 1 May 1857, gained sanctuary aboard the American warship St. Mary's.(7)

Walker's dream died hard. Late in November 1857, he and a band of his followers slipped into Greytown harbor and pitched camp at Puntas Arenas. American and British warships converged on the spot to round up the freebooters. On 8 December, Lieutenants James Lewis and John O. Payne led a force of American Marines ashore at Puntas Arenas. Together with a battalion of seamen, they surrounded Walker's camp, while the warships Fulton, Saratoga, and Wabash trained their guns on the knot of filibusters. Walker wisely surrendered.(8)

Again in 1858, Walker mounted another expedition, only to be shipwrecked in a gale off the coast of Honduras. In August 1860, however, he returned to Central America. This time, he landed in Honduras in an attempt to secure a base from which to invade Nicaragua. After some initial successes, the steam warship HMS Icarus interfered. Once he had brought Walker to bay, Captain Norvell Salmon of the Icarus accepted the American's surrender and delivered him to the Hondurans who ordered him shot. William Walker was executed on 11 September 1860.(9)

The brief, hectic career of William Walker caused the Liberal and Conservative elements to unite, for a time at least, against foreign intervention. After his death, the coalition dissolved with the Conservatives gaining the upper hand. From 1863 to 1893, they avoided the pitfalls which might lead to rebellion. Two rail lines were built during this era, the first from Corinto to Leon and a second from Managua to Granada. Farmers enjoyed greater prosperity, and the educational system was reformed. The Liberals, of course, were not satisfied; but there was no burning issue upon which to base a call to arms.(10)

Relations between Nicaragua and Great Britain also improved once the Walker menace had ended. By the Treaty of Managua, 1860, Great Britain recognized Nicaragua's sovereignty over the Mosquito Coast but extracted a pledge of self-government for the Indians. Throughout the 30 years of domestic stability, Nicaragua lived up to the terms of the agreement.(11)

Strange as it may seem, it was the Conservatives, members of the party in power, who triggered the revolution which ended this era of peace. President Roberto Sacasa was a Conservative from the city of Leon. Although he owed his success to the aristocrats of Granada, he could not break the ties that bound him to his native city. The manner in which Sacasa continued to reward his Liberal friends aroused the wrath of his own party, and the Conservative ranks split with the disgruntled element raising the cry of rebellion. Quick to take advantage of the dissension within Conservative ranks was Jose Santos Zelaya, a citizen of Managua. The Liberals sprang to arms and routed their political foes.(12)

A renewal of civil strife in Nicaragua was an invitation for foreign intervention. Early in 1894, a British warship anchored at Bluefields to halt alleged infringement upon the treaty rights of the Mosquito Indians. By the year's end, however, Britain forfeited control of the reservation to Nicaragua.

The United States, also, was forced to intervene to protect American property at Bluefields. On 6 July 1894, Lieutenant Franklin J. Moses led ashore a contingent of Marines from the Colombia. On the last day of the month, reinforcements were landed from the Marblehead. Both detachments were withdrawn on 7 August.

All in all, the Zelaya administration was among the most turbulent that Nicaragua had yet to experience. In 1896, the Liberals balked when the President decided to succeed himself in office; but he was able to enlist enough Conservative strength to remain in office. From 2 to 4 May 1896, when fighting near Corinto endangered American holdings, 15 Marines, under 1st Sergeant Frederick W. M. Poppe, and 19 seamen stood guard.

War again broke out in 1898, as Zelaya extended his tenure for still another term. The local United States consular agent requested the USS Alert, at anchor in the harbor of Bluefields, to stand by in case of an attack on the city. On the morning of 7 February, the American flag rose union downward over the consulate. In answer to this distress signal, a force of 14 Marines and 19 seamen was landed. On the following day, the government forces agreed to guarantee the safety of all foreigners, and the landing party was withdrawn.

A similar landing, 16 seamen and Marines and a Colt automatic gun, took place at Bluefields on 24 February 1899. Again, a display of force was enough to prevent both rebels and government troops from destroying American property.(13)

The Zelaya administration combined Liberal idealism with graft and aggression. On the credit side, the dictator overhauled the public school system and strove ceaselessly to attract foreign industries to Nicaragua. The achievements, unfortunately, were more than outweighed by the fact that he ran the government for his own gain. The president and members of his cabinet held a monopoly over the nation's business enterprises. Without any thought for the future, they peddled Nicaragua's national resources to the highest bidder. Goods needed by the national government were paid for in worthless scrip, and soon the country was caught in the coils of inflation.

In the field of international affairs, Zelaya resurrected the dream of a Central American republic and set out to bring all five states in the area under his sway. Both the United States and European powers were eager to restore peace in Central America, principally because war endangered their investments in the region. Since President Theodore Roosevelt considered European intervention as contrary to the Monroe Doctrine, it became the responsibility of the United States to assist in maintaining order. Roosevelt extended the good offices of his government, and representatives of the Central American states met in Washington in 1907 to negotiate a general treaty of peace. This covenant was signed, but more important, the five republics agreed to submit their future grievances to a Central American Court of Justice.(14)

At the time, it appeared that Roosevelt had won a striking diplomatic victory. Without resorting to force, he had averted the threat of European lodgement in an area vital to the security of the United States. He had extracted pledges from each of the Central American republics not to meddle in the internal affairs of the others. Finally, the Central American Court of Justice, with member judges from each of the five states, seemed capable of keeping the peace. The only difficulty lay in the fact that Zelaya had no intention of keeping his word.

William Howard Taft succeeded Roosevelt as President of the United States. He inherited the recalcitrant Zelaya, but he also was bequeathed a domestic economy rebounding from the depression of 1907. Since there was a great deal of surplus capital available for investment abroad, Taft and Philander Knox, his Secretary of State, hoped to employ this money in their foreign policy. The result was known as "Dollar Diplomacy." Basically, their plan was to have United States diplomats encourage foreign states to borrow or buy from American banks and manufacturers. This would relieve the chronic financial burdens of friendly nations, raise their standards of living, and, by providing markets for American goods, insure continued domestic prosperity.

While Taft was encouraging Americans to invest aboard, President Zelaya was having financial problems of his own. Graft and inflation again had drained Nicaragua's treasury. The shortage of funds was a source of acute embarrassment.

A great many Conservatives were growing weary of Zelaya. Throughout his reign, the dictator had made the Granada aristocrats his whipping boys; now the time had come for revenge. Eager to help the dissatisfied Nicaraguans were the foreign businessmen who had seen their holdings sold from under them according to the whims of a fickle president. In the autumn of 1909, the two groups joined forces. Financed by foreign interests, the Conservatives landed an army at Bluefields and took the offensive against Zelaya.

Chosen to lead the Conservative revolt was Juan J. Estrada, governor of Bluefields Province, an appointee of the Zelaya government. Estrada's defection to Conservative ranks gave the rebels control of almost the entire Caribbean coast.(15)

The United States at first refused to intervene. Had it not been for Zelaya's folly, there might have been no landing by Marines. Shortly after the revolt began, government forces captured two American citizens serving with the Conservative army. Zelaya had them shot as traitors. Secretary of State Knox protested at once. Convinced that the Conservatives represented the majority of the Nicaraguan people, the United States severed diplomatic relations with the Zelaya government.

The Nicaraguan dictator had victory within his grasp, for Estrada's troops were falling back toward Bluefields. To remain in the good graces of Secretary Knox, at least until the Conservative threat was exterminated, Zelaya resigned as president in favor of Dr. Jose Madriz, another Liberal politician. The United States, however, withheld recognition of the Madriz regime.(16)

Early American Intervention

Determined to crush once and for all the menace of an aggressive dictatorship in Central America, Knox and Taft decided to intervene. Estrada, badly beaten, had fallen back upon Bluefields to re-equip his troops and to obtain reinforcements. The government countered by buying a steamship, mounting guns on her, and using her to blockade Bluefields. When the vessel moved into position to bombard that city, the United States showed its hand.

As early as February 1910, Marine units and Navy vessels had begun to concentrate in Nicaraguan waters. On the western coast, a regiment led by Colonel James E. Mahoney was aboard the Buffalo off Corinto; but the area of operation shifted rapidly to the opposite coast, and in March, the unit returned to Panama. The task of halting the fighting around Bluefields fell to the seamen and Marines of the Dubuque and Paducah. On 19 May, landing parties from both ships went ashore to guard American property and to establish what came to be called in later revolutions a "neutral zone." Once the situation ashore had been stabilized, the vessels took turns shuttling reinforcements to Bluefields. While one prevented any attempt at bombardment or blockade, the other would steam to Panama to load elements of a Marine battalion commanded by Major Smedley D. Butler, a hero of the Boxer Rebellion.

The forces of President Madriz were stopped cold in their tracks. Their converted freighter could not hope to stand up to the guns of American cruisers, nor could their poorly disciplined army be expected to make any headway against Butler's men. Worse than the military impasse was the fact that Estrada had been allowed to take over the Bluefields customs office, thus cutting off the government from one of its prime sources of income. Faced with this dilemma, the Liberals fell to quarrelling among themselves, their troops began deserting, and the regime crumbled like a castle of sand. Estrada marched triumphantly into Managua to try his hand at running the country. Most of the Liberals were pardoned, but Zelaya accepted an offer of asylum in Mexico.(17)

On 4 September 1910, Butler's battalion sailed for Panama, its mission accomplished. Estrada was holding the reins of government, the American property in Bluefields was intact; but, for the State Department, the task was just beginning. European creditors were demanding payment on the loans negotiated by Zelaya.

Secretary Knox sent Thomas C. Dawson to assist the Nicaraguans in overhauling the nation's finances. Estrada promised to revoke the concessions granted by Zelaya and to call a constitutional convention which would draft a more stable form of government.

Secretary Knox moved quickly to negotiate a treaty with Nicaragua. The document was to give American bankers the protection they demanded before making any substantial loan to the Estrada government. The bankers requested, and Estrada agreed, that the United States should have control over the collection of Nicaraguan customs duties and that the money derived from customs should be used to repay the loan.

The treaty then went before the Senate of the United States, and while it was being debated, two American banking firms made some $15 million available to the Estrada government at 5 percent interest. Then, to the surprise of everyone, the Senate rejected Knox's treaty. The bankers did their best to insure that their money would not end up in the pockets of Nicaraguan cabinet members. To handle the stabilization of the country's currency, they set up a National Bank of Nicaragua in which they retained a controlling interest. These investors also advanced enough money to defray the operating expenses of the national government in return for stock in Nicaragua's National Railway. Last, they got permission to appoint the collector of customs.

In spite of the sudden influx of capital and the improved handling of revenue, Estrada soon found himself in the usual financial difficulty. He tried too hard to redress the wrongs of his predecessor. Conservatives, whose property had been confiscated by Zelaya, demanded some sort of settlement. It was the payment of these claims which set the government tottering on the brink of bankruptcy.

Another difficulty dogging Estrada was the fact that as a recent convert from Liberalism he was not the real leader of the Conservative party. At the head of the "machine" was Emiliano Chamorro, an aristocrat, who kept a close watch over the President's actions. The presence within the official family of an unrepentant Liberal, Jose Maria Moncada, and a headstrong Conservative, Luis Mena, made it even harder for the President to adopt any consistent domestic policy.

Estrada, nevertheless, might have weathered the storm had it not been for the loans. This issue proved a rallying point for the Liberal opposition who claimed that the Conservatives had sold out to the United States. To have a foreigner in charge of Nicaragua's finances was doubly galling, for besides halting political graft, it wounded the national pride. Not only were the Liberal politicians aroused, the peasants themselves were angered by this affront to their homeland. The loan, then, marked a change in Nicaraguan political life. Those religious conflicts which had brought about the forming of the rival parties had long ago been forgotten. Civic pride was dying. From now on, subservience to the United States would be the major issue, with the Liberals being militantly anti-American while the Conservatives depended upon the support of the United States to remain in power.

In the autumn of 1911, the constitutional convention set up by the Dawson Agreement had pledged itself to retain Estrada for another term, but it suddenly changed its mind and reported out a constitution which would have stripped the chief executive of most of his powers. Estrada immediately dissolved the convention; but Luis Mena, in the meantime had pressured the National Assembly into electing him president. Mena promptly was jailed, but a band of officers gathered in Managua to release their leader. Fortunately, the American Minister was able to restrain the rebels long enough for Estrada to resign. With the army under his thumb, Mena was in control. He declined, however, to take office until his elected term should begin; so Adolfo Diaz succeeded Estrada.(18)

During the spring and summer of 1912, Nicaragua seemed headed for anarchy. The great issue of the day was the acceptance of the loan and the subsequent surrender of control of the nation's customs. The Liberals were violently anti-American, while Mena's followers, most of them Conservatives, resented Diaz's negotiations with the United States. What followed was a three-cornered battle, with Diaz trying to maintain the old order, Mena struggling to control Diaz, and the Liberals, under Benjamin Zeledon, trying to destroy both Conservative factions. Hostilities began on the last day of May, when the Liberals blew up Loma Fort at Managua. Some 60 people were killed in this blast, which was followed in a few days by the destruction of a powder magazine in the same city.

To Diaz, control of his own party seemed more important than suppressing the Liberal revolt. Apparently, he felt that once he had rid himself of Mena, the United States would be induced to support him. On 29 July 1912, he replaced Mena with Emiliano Chamorro. The ousted cabinet member fled to Masaya, site of a federal arsenal. There, his son, commander of the army barracks at Granada, joined him with troops. Since Mena was opposed to the loan, a great many Liberals flocked to his standard; but his distrust of that party and of Benjamin Zeledon, its leader, prevented the forming of a united front.

A Major American Intervention

After urging Americans to invest in Nicaragua, the United States government could not stand idly by and see their properties destroyed. The American Minister demanded that Diaz guarantee effective protection of American citizens and property. Diaz replied that he was powerless to give such an assurance and requested American intervention.(19)

The first detachment of the American forces that President Diaz had requested was a handful of seamen from the USS Annapolis who arrived at Managua from Corinto on 4 August. Although the presence of a few Bluejackets might be sufficient to dampen the ardor of the rebels at Managua, a much larger force--probably several battalions of infantry--would be needed to protect American interests throughout the country. Such an expedition would need bases of supply; so for this reason, as well as to deny the port to the rebels, Bluefields was occupied. The USS Tacoma landed 19 Marines and twice as many seamen there on 17 August.

The spearhead of the expeditionary force was to be once again Major Butler's battalion, consisting of 13 officers and 341 men. The Justin, carrying the battalion and its equipment, arrived at Corinto on 14 August and anchored near the Annapolis. The Marines immediately went ashore. Thus, within two weeks, American forces had gained a foothold on both coasts and assembled a fairly powerful infantry unit ready to strike eastward toward Managua and the interior.(20)

The first task confronting Butler was the relief of the Managua legation. He decided to bull his way into the city and then, once his position was secure, begin the formal palaver which might bring peace. Three companies of Marines and 80 seamen scrambled aboard two trains to begin the 90-mile haul from Corinto to the capital. On the following day, 15 August, Butler and his men pulled into Managua.

With Managua secure from attack for the time being, Butler decided to make his peace overtures to General Mena. The American Minister and the Marine major pooled their talents to draw up a message urging Mena to yield honorably. The rebel general was known to be somewhere in the vicinity of Masaya with a large number of troops. First Lieutenant Edward H. Conger, Private Carl W. Aviszus, and Private Charles T. Kline volunteered to deliver the note. On 16 August, the trio struck out. Returning to the legation, Conger reported that General Mena, ill with rheumatism, would be only too happy to surrender but that he no longer commanded rebel forces. Benjamin Zeledon, formerly Minister of War in the Zelaya cabinet and a die-hard Liberal, had succeeded him.(21)

In the meantime, reinforcements were arriving at Corinto, so Butler decided to make contact with them to tell them of these latest developments. Commander Warren J. Terhune, Marine Captain Nelson P. Vulte, 10 Marines, and 40 seamen boarded a train at Managua on 20 August and rattled off toward Corinto. Near Leon, the locomotive came grinding to a halt before a crude road block. Neither Terhune nor Vulte was willing to risk an attack against a force of undetermined size in the gathering dusk. Their decision to pull back some three miles and wait for dawn was a wise one.

The night was quiet. On the following morning, the seamen removed the block, and the train crept forward until it was halted by a rebel patrol. The Nicaraguans held their fire and merely requested that the Americans hold a conference with their commander. Vulte obtained permission to pass unchallenged through rebel lines.

Confident that he had won a diplomatic victory, Vulte returned to the train and reported to Commander Terhune. Outguards slung their rifles and scrambled aboard as the locomotive began to gather momentum. Leon loomed ahead as the Americans rolled onward, but suddenly, a mob of armed rebels appeared astride the rails and fanned out to surround Terhune's command. Its leaders decided to free the seamen and Marines but hold the train, and the Americans began the long trek back to Managua.(22)

The capture of the train was no laughing matter. In itself, the failure to break through was of little consequence, but the affair added immeasurably to the prestige of the rebels. Butler could have awaited reinforcements behind the fortifications at Managua--this was the course of action urged upon him by the American Minister; but he was a man impatient by nature. He decided to divide his forces and, with about 190 men, open up the railway from Managua to Corinto.

Butler with Commander Terhune, and Marine Lieutenants Alexander Vandegrift, Edward Ostermann, and Richard Tebbs loaded the men on two trains and on 25 August started toward the coast.(23)

Unlike the Terhune expedition, Butler's trains ran into difficulties from the outset. Weakened culverts and torn up rails slowed the progress of the column, but there was no serious opposition until the lead train approached a trestle on the outskirts of Leon. A band of rebel irregulars halted the Americans. Made bold by the previous success, the commandante shouldered his way up to Butler and began a long tirade designed to reduce the major to a cowering hulk. When this approach failed, the rebel drew his revolver; but Butler struck like a cat, snatching up the weapon and ceremoniously unloading it. The mob dissolved in a roar of laughter, and the Americans, with the chastened commander as their prisoner, rolled on into Leon.

The citizens of Leon were in as violent a mood as they had been when they captured the first train. Butler's caravan was slowed to a walk as the locomotives clanked past the ominous crowds. A powerful woman threaded her way through the mob and ran toward the engine cab where the slender Butler was seated. Reaching up, she began honing her machete on Butler's leggings, all the while screaming that she would bury the blade in the major's skull. Instead of firing the shot which might have triggered a massacre, he reached down and chucked her under the chin. Forgetting her plans for homicide in her embarrassment, she turned and fled.

The comparatively short trip from Leon to Corinto passed without incident. Butler informed the American Naval officers at Corinto of Zeledon's rise and Mena's illness. All that remained was to return to Managua. Again, the trains were halted by torn-up rails and damaged bridges, but there was no armed interference.(24)

Upon his return to Managua, Major Butler found the situation little changed. Government troops still manned the city's defenses, and the threat of an all-out assault by the rebels had vanished.(25)

Two additional Marine units, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 1st Provisional Regiment, arrived at Corinto on 4 September, along with the regimental commander, Colonel Joseph H. Pendleton. Within two days, this force had completed its movement by rail to Managua, freeing Butler's battalion for operations elsewhere along the railroad right of way.(26)

The first mission which Pendleton assigned Butler was to clear the railway from the capital through Masaya southeast to Granada, and on 15 September, he entrained with his battalion for Granada. His was a formidable task force. Three companies with a pair of machine guns and two three-inch field pieces were crammed aboard the train. Two locomotives, separated by box cars and placed near the rear of the train, propelled a strange collection of rolling-stock, ranging from flat cars for the supporting weapons to a passenger coach. Aside from the groans of the steam engines, there was no cause for worry until the train approached La Barranca, a hill near Masaya, where government troops were besieging General Zeledon's Liberals.(27)

Halting the train well out of range of Liberal batteries, Butler commandeered a handcar and pumped back to within federal lines, only to learn, that instead of a quiet siege, his men had wandered into the midst of a pitched battle. Butler and a Spanish-speaking officer strode forward under a flag of truce to talk with Zeledon.

Butler arranged for a conference between one of Zeledon's officers and Colonel Pendleton; but this was not enough, for the rebel commander in chief insisted upon talking with the ranking American naval officer as well.

After several days of conferences between Zeledon and Rear Admiral William H. H. Southerland, in the afternoon of 19 September a messenger arrived, telling the Marines that Zeledon had agreed to allow the trains to pass through his lines. At 2010, they pushed off into the deepening gloom, their rifles ready and with over a dozen machine guns scattered along the length of the train.

Rumbling through Masaya, the train had slowed for a cross street, when a man mounted on a horse galloped toward the locomotive. He swept up to the cab, pulled a pistol, and fired at Major Butler. The bullet struck a Marine corporal in the finger. Butler halted the train to allow a surgeon to administer first aid. Immediately, rebel snipers stationed on rooftops opened fire. The Marines began blazing away, many of them dropping from the cars and taking cover beside the roadbed. Butler sent the train hurtling along the rails. A handful of the men firing from beside the train was left behind; but Captain Vulte collected them, loaded them on a handcar, and took out after the rapidly disappearing boxcars.

A mile or so beyond Masaya, Vulte caught up to the train. Butler had stopped to take a head count and was seething with rage. Five of his men had been wounded, while three still were missing. At this moment, four envoys arrived with a letter of apology from Zeledon. Butler demanded that his three Marines be returned immediately, or he would attack Masaya in the morning. Within the hour, the men were returned, one of them slightly wounded.(28)

Safely past Zeledon's Liberals, Butler had to contend with General Mena's rebels at Granada. Great sections of track had been ripped up, progress was slow, and Butler was in an impatient mood by the time he met Mena's delegation. The village of San Blas, near Granada, had been chosen by Butler as the site of the meeting. Butler threatened to attack Granada unless Mena signed a letter of surrender.(29)

Mena stalled as long as he could. At 0145 on the morning of 22 September, Butler rounded up his officers to outline his plan of attack, a thrust directly along the tracks into Granada. Just as the point was starting down the rails, Mena's letter of surrender arrived.(30)

Later that day, Pendleton and a trainload of rations and medicine arrived at Granada, and Mena was allowed to go peacefully into exile. Save for Zeledon's bastion on the Barranca-Coyotope hill mass, the entire railroad system was free from rebel interference. With Mena out of the picture, Pendleton was able to concentrate against Zeledon.

On 2 October, the Marines arrived within federal lines. During the following day, Marine artillery joined government cannoneers in shelling Liberal positions. In the evening, Butler was ordered to move his battalion into position to attack the southeastern slopes of Coyotope in cooperation with federal troops.

The fight was brief. At 0515, Butler's men joined the others in storming up the slope against a heavy volume of inaccurate fire. In 40 minutes, the battle had ended. Nine rebels were captured, 27 killed, and the rest put to flight. General Zeledon was killed by Liberal soldiers when he attempted to desert them. Seven American seamen and Marines were killed at Coyotope.

The town of Masaya fell to government troops who enjoyed a carnival of killing and looting, but Leon wisely surrendered to an American officer. The revolution suppressed, the Marine regiment was withdrawn; but a force of Leathernecks remained on duty at the Managua legation.(31)

What were the results of the American intervention? First of all, the Conservatives retained their precarious hold on the Presidency, but their power rested on the presence of a strong Marine detachment at the Managua legation. In addition, American diplomats managed to forestall a split in Conservative ranks. Both Diaz and General Chamorro wanted to be President for the 1913-1917 term; but the American Minister managed to convince the general to accept appointment as Nicaraguan

Minister to the United States. Since the Diaz ticket was the only one placed before the electorate--a mere three or four thousand citizens were allowed to vote--the Conservatives were unanimously elected.(32)

The most important accomplishment, of course, was the bringing of peace to Nicaragua. Respite from war offered the nation a chance to raise the standards of living of its people, and pay its debts--in short to fulfill the altruistic purposes of Dollar Diplomacy. American investments were protected by Marines during the revolt, and afterward by the Diaz government. Last, but far from least, the United States had intervened with enough vigor to prove once again that no European encroachment in Central America would be tolerated.

Woodrow Wilson, inaugurated President of the United States in March 1913, selected William Jennings Bryan as his Secretary of State. Bryan resurrected the Knox treaty, inserted a clause giving the United States the right to intervene with armed forces, obtained the signature of General Chamorro, and submitted the draft to the United States Senate. Signed in August 1914, the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty languished in the Senate until February 1916. Not until the clause added by Bryan had been removed would the American legislators ratify the agreement. Nicaragua quickly ratified.(33)

Like the intervention of 1912, the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty became a vital issue in Nicaraguan politics. Diaz had survived in power thanks to the work of American Marines. The fact that the United States now had obtained leases on the canal route and upon valuable sites for naval bases looked to many Nicaraguans as though the United States was taking advantage of Diaz. The financial reforms would work to benefit all Nicaragua; but the fact remained that they worked slowly, and the average Nicaraguan could see only that foreigners were dictating his nation's fiscal policy. The Liberals, of course, pointed to the Marine detachment at Managua and shouted that Diaz was a mere puppet of the United States. They circulated all sorts of rumors about American designs upon the country; and, since few had the means of checking their accuracy, the Liberals won a great many converts to anti-Americanism.(34)

Nicaragua was preparing for the 1916 presidential election. By this time, the Conservatives finally had split, with Diaz claiming the loyalty of his circle of office holders, while the rank and file rallied behind Emiliano Chamorro. Diaz put forward Carlos Cuadras Paso as his candidate, but the majority of the Conservatives were for Chamorro. The third candidate was the choice of the Liberals, Julian Irias, formerly an advisor to Zelaya. The nomination of Irias placed the United States in an embarrassing position. Since there were more Liberals than Conservatives in the country, an honest election would have brought into power a man who had been associated with one of the most corrupt and warlike regimes ever to hold power over Nicaragua. On the other hand, if the United States allowed Diaz to supervise the voting, Cuadras would win, and the Liberals might unite with a majority of Conservatives against him. The problem lay in preventing the election of Irias, a man dedicated to freeing Nicaragua from American control, while avoiding a situation which might result in rebellion. The solution was complex. The Diaz government prevented the exiled Irias from returning to campaign, while the United States made it clear to the Liberals that no President ever associated with Zelaya would be recognized as lawful ruler. Next, Cuadras was persuaded to withdraw; and in October, Chamorro won in a landslide.(35)

Being President of Nicaragua easily becomes a habit. Once in power, a chief executive seldom stepped down willingly. Chamorro, however, was an exception to this rule. After four years in the executive mansion, he selected an uncle to succeed him. In 1920, Diego Chamorro stood for election on the Conservative ticket, and 90,000 Nicaraguans cast votes in the turbulent canvass. On that number, Diego Chamorro received some 58,000, a safe plurality.

After the votes had been counted, Emiliano Chamorro agreed to a revision of the electoral law, then stood aside as his uncle took the oath of office. Harold W. Dodds, an American political scientist, was given the thankless task of devising honest electoral machinery for the republic. His plan, completed in 1922, was submitted to the Nicaraguan congress, where it met the bitter opposition of the Conservatives. The Liberals, who felt that an honest election would insure their victory, supported the measure. Not until the American Minister had reminded President Chamorro that his nephew had virtually promised the passage of such a law did the Conservatives come into line.(36)

The new electoral law was first tested in 1924. It was the most nearly honest election ever held in the republic. Proof of this lay in the fact that a coalition government was placed in office; Conservative Carlos Solarzano became President and Liberal Juan Sacasa Vice-President.(37)

And what of the Marines during this era of electoral reform? During the presidency of Diego Chamorro, the men of the Legation Guard were treated as hated symbols of American imperialism. The most difficult problem facing the Marines was the trying task of getting along with the Nicaraguans. Little had been done to ease the lot of the Leathernecks. Morale officers tried, but they had neither the time nor the equipment to organize an all-round athletic program. The most popular form of recreation was drinking, and this sport was pursued in the dingy cantinas of the city, where there always were women to fight over. As far as the local police were concerned, a drunken or disorderly Marine was fair game.

The series of clashes between Marines and police came to a head on the night of 8 December 1921, when a private shot and killed a policeman. As a result of this incident, a systematic town patrol was begun and every effort was made to raise the morale and standards of conduct of the command.(38) While these reforms were taking place, the guard was reinforced to head off any Liberal-inspired rioting. Early in January 1922, a group of 30 Marines arrived from the USS Galveston. A little later, 52 men arrived from the Denver, while the Nitro contributed 45 Leathernecks. After a few weeks, the majority of the reinforcements were withdrawn.(39)

The bringing in of reinforcements was justified, for the flames of hate were raging throughout Nicaragua. Diego Chamorro was flayed in the newspapers for permitting the Americans to land additional Marines, but the frenzy for war soon passed. Of more lasting importance was the fact that Mexican propagandists seized upon the incident to claim a contrast between "the benevolence of their nation" and "American barbarity." For the first time, a bond between the Nicaraguan Liberals and the Mexican government began to emerge.(40)

In May, the long awaited Liberal revolt took place. Loma fort was seized, but the Legation Guard was sufficiently strong to prevent fighting in Managua. Government troops easily suppressed the uprising.(41) By this time, Liberal sentiment was beginning to be swayed by the hope of electoral reform. A calm settled over the country, a peace that remained unbroken even when President Chamorro died in office. The Vice President was known to have ambitions to succeed himself in office; and the Liberals, relying on the American promise of fair elections, pointed out to the United States that this would be illegal. The State Department informed them that no government which seized power in defiance of the constitution would be recognized. Satisfied, the Liberals turned their energies to winning the next election.(42)

From the fevered heights of early 1922, the hatred felt by the Liberals toward the Marines gradually cooled, until by election time, the Leathernecks were regarded with some esteem. A few Marines assisted Dr. Dodds in observing registration for the 1924 canvass; and when it was proposed that Marines supervise the actual electoral count, the Conservatives and not the Liberals complained.(43) The absence of observers at this critical time probably accounts for the fact that the Liberals were unable to win the Presidency along with the Vice Presidency.

Upon taking office, President Carlos Solorzano vowed that his administration would be the most scrupulously honest in the history of the republic. He praised the efforts of the United States to bolster the Nicaraguan economy and stressed the fact that sound fiscal practices would insure the continued American cooperation. The notion of peaceful cooperation was borne out by the decision to withdraw the Legation Guard from Managua. Long before the election, notice had been given that the force would be withdrawn on 1 January 1925. Because his was a coalition government, by nature unstable, President Solorzano obtained postponement until 4 August. During the interim, the Marines were to train an efficient constabulary to maintain order in Nicaragua. In spite of its alleged eagerness for the creation of a national police force, the new government took no action to organize the constabulary until shortly before the Marines sailed.(44)

The departure of the Legation Guard was the product of a slow evolution in American foreign policy. As early as 1913, Woodrow Wilson had hailed the emancipation of the Central American states from foreign domination. He had hoped to deal with these nations as equals, but the strategic importance of Nicaragua forced him to keep a close eye on the nation's domestic affairs. Victory over Germany and the assurance of continued friendship with Great Britain ended the danger of European encroachment. As far as the bankers were concerned, investments in Europe became more important than Central American holdings. Finally, the American people were becoming more interested in purely domestic issues, such as prohibition, than in the vigorous enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. Thus, President Calvin Coolidge followed Wilson's lead by urging honest elections in Nicaragua rather than the election of a government amenable to the United States. Removal of the Legation Guard signalled the beginning of an attempt to deal with Nicaragua as a sovereign power through diplomatic channels; but the attempt was soon to fail.

Approximately three weeks after the last of the Marines had left Nicaragua, a group of Liberal cabinet members sat down to a banquet in Managua to the sound of popping champagne corks. A band of Conservatives burst into the room, accused them of treason, and had the lot of them thrown into jail. The final blow fell on 25 October 1925, when the followers of the ultra-Conservative Emiliano Chamorro seized the fortifications on La Loma. President Solorzano and Vice President Sacasa prudently left the country. Purged of its Liberal members, the Nicaraguan congress was reorganized; and on 16 January 1926, Chamorro took over as President.(45)

The United States, Mexico, and the other Central American republics were shocked by Chamorro's boldness. The United States not only refused to recognize the revolutionary government but also tried to persuade Chamorro to resign. Thanks to the elaborate controls established over the collection of customs by the Americans, these revenues automatically went to the central government no matter who was President. Although his rise to power was clearly unconstitutional, the new dictator had carefully preserved the financial machinery of the republic. Thus, he was assured of a steady source of revenue. For the time being at least, he could afford to ignore the protests of the United States.

Although rioting began to sweep Nicaragua, President Chamorro did not lose his poise. He felt that, if worse came to worse, the United States would support the Conservatives as it had done before. In May 1926, the American cruiser Cleveland dropped anchor at Bluefields; but no aid to the Conservatives was forthcoming, for the seamen and Marines who went ashore were interested only in protecting American property. Another blow to the Chamorro government was the fact that the United States accorded the exiled Sacasa all the honors due the Vice President of a friendly state.

Still another threat to Chamorro's peace of mind was the desire of the Mexican government to supplant the United States as the protector of all Central America. Since the Liberals were thought to be the party of Nicaraguan nationalism, Mexico began providing them with arms and ammunition.(46)

In eastern Nicaragua, a Liberal army led by General Jose Moncada was forcing the Conservatives back upon Bluefields. Although both sides had so far tried scrupulously to avoid endangering the lives of foreigners, a battle at Bluefields was certain to claim many innocent victims. To insure the neutrality of the town, the cruiser Galveston anchored there on 27 August 1926, and landed over a hundred seamen and Marines.(47)

Conservatives at Bluefields hailed the landing as a deliverance from their enemies, but joy turned to disappointment when the Americans refused to take sides in the revolution. Instead of jumping to the defense of the Chamorro regime, the Marines marched into camp on the outskirts of town, while the seamen set up cots in the local Moravian mission. First of all, the landing force was to prevent the warring armies from fighting in Bluefields, and second, it was to prevent rioting within the town.

In the meantime, the Liberals and Conservatives were at each other's throats. For two weeks, the Liberals had hurled massed infantry attacks at the Conservative positions atop El Bluff but had accomplished nothing. When it became apparent that the bloody impasse could not be ended, the Americans, on 24 September, extended the neutral zone across the bay to El Bluff, forcing the armies to march off to Rama to resume the war.(48)

In spite of the failure at El Bluff, Liberal arms were doing quite well. Although they had not been able to crush their Conservative adversaries, the Liberals had prolonged the war until commerce had become disrupted. This, of course, cut off revenues at their source, so that Chamorro was becoming hard pressed to finance his war. The United States arranged for a 30-day truce beginning 1 October and invited both sides to send delegates to a peace conference at Corinto. While armed Marines enforced a neutral zone around the city, discussions were held from 16 to 24 October aboard the cruiser Denver. The American objective was to find an impartial person to head an interim goverment. Although Sacasa did not feel that it was safe for him to attend, he sent representatives to suggest candidates for the post of provisional President. Unfortunately, neither side trusted the other. No one man could be found acceptable to both parties, and the conference adjourned with nothing accomplished.

On 30 October 1926, the day the truce expired. President Chamorro announced his resignation. The Conservative congress chose Senator Sebastian Uriza as his successor, but again the United States withheld diplomatic recognition from the new government. Thoroughly weary of a war that promised to be the bloodiest in Nicaragua's history, congress reconvened, reinstated the Liberal members expelled by Chamorro, and chose Adolfo Diaz, Chief Executive during the intervention of 1912, to serve as President until the 1928 election.

The interim government headed by Diaz was constitutional. Apparently a genuine attempt had been made to reconstitute the congress as it had been before the Chamorro coup. Also, Nicaraguan law allowed the senate to elect one of its members to the presidency in the event that both the President and his Vice President were residing outside the country. At this time, Solorzano was ensconced in California; while Sacasa was protesting from Guatemala that he would not survive for long should he return to Managua. Since the government was legitimate, the United States extended almost immediate recognition.

Although the United States was prompt to recognize the Diaz government, a move endorsed by most European powers, Mexico insisted that Sacasa was the rightful ruler of Nicaragua even though he was absent from the country.(49)

Diaz failed to end the revolution. Neither the promise of a high diplomatic post for himself nor the assurance of pay for his troops could induce General Moncada to lay down his arms unless ordered to do so by former Vice President Sacasa. To make matters even worse, Sacasa himself arrived in Nicaragua early in December to take an active part in the revolt. With him came additional shipments of Mexican arms. In the meantime, Diaz kept up the clamor for further assistance from the United States.(50)

Another Major American Intervention

President Diaz' first appeal for full-scale American intervention reached the State Department on 15 November 1926, the day following American recognition of the new government. Although the Liberals, fed by continuing shipments of Mexican war materiel, waxed stronger each day, President of the United States Calvin Coolidge maintained an icy silence. Not until a series of outrages were committed upon American citizens did his attitude begin to thaw.

First off, the Liberals, or Constitutionalists as Sacasa called them, began imposing annoying taxes on American firms. The United States lodged the customary protest with Diaz and directed its nationals to ignore the Sacasa government. It was, however, rather difficult to ignore the Constitutionalists when so many of them had rifles. American businessmen along the eastern coast of Nicaragua were unable to prevent the rebels from seizing their supplies and equipment. Finally, late in December, an American citizen employed at Puerto Cabezas (Bragman's Bluff), was killed by a band of rebels. To serve as a shield against the lawless bands that followed in the wake of the Constitutionalist army, Marines were landed at Rio Grande, Bragman's Bluff, and Prinzapolca. At Managua, British and Italian diplomatic representatives informed the American Minister that their subjects were in grave danger.

Total disregard for American lives and property at last hardened President Coolidge's heart against the Liberal cause. The President of the United States, on 10 January 1927, informed Congress that he would do everything in his power to protect American interests in Nicaragua. The President based his decision upon the time-honored right of a nation to protect its nationals residing on foreign soil. Besides employing military force, Coolidge was to authorize the sale to the Diaz government of 3000 Krag rifles, 200 Browning machine guns, and 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition.(51)

At the time President Coolidge was addressing Congress, American forces already were standing guard over the foreigners living in Managua. On 6 January, the Marines and seamen of the Galveston's landing party filed ashore at Corinto to dash over the railroad into the capital.

The strength of American forces in Nicaragua increased. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, arrived at Bluefields on 10 January. After establishing a neutral zone along the Escondido River, the battalion, less the 51st Company at Rama, sailed from Bluefields through the Panama Canal to Corinto. On 1 February, at the request of President Diaz, Lieutenant Colonel James J. Meade's Marines relieved government troops of responsibility for the defense of Managua.

In spite of the assurance of further American aid, the fortunes of the Diaz government were taking a turn for the worse. Early in February, the Liberals captured Chinandega in a bloody house-to-house fight. Government troops regained the town, but not before the heart of Chinandega had been burned and blasted to rubble. The Americans rushed food and medical supplies to the suffering citizens; and on 19 February, a reinforced Marine rifle company, together with landing parties from three cruisers, left Managua to post garrison at ruined Chinandega and at undamaged Leon. There, the seamen kept peace in the city, while the Marines manned an outpost on the edge of town to guard against the sabotage of a railway bridge.(52)

Throughout February, the Marine Corps continued to pour men and equipment into Nicaragua. Led by Major Ross E. Rowell, VO-1M landed at Corinto, loaded its six DeHavilland aircraft on flatcars, and rumbled off to Managua. That same day, the USS Henderson steamed out from Quantico carrying over a thousand reinforcements for the 5th Regiment. Brigadier General Logan Feland arrived at Corinto on 7 March to command the 2000 Marines serving in Nicaragua.(53)

Although he approved of armed intervention, President Coolidge had not neglected the art of diplomacy. Ignoring Diaz' plea for a treaty by which the United States would guarantee the peace in Nicaragua, he decided to send his own personal representative, Henry L. Stimson, to the troubled nation.

Stimson's appointment came at a difficult time. Early in March, an American consular official at Matagalpa had been attacked and severely injured by unidentified assailants. Within two days, 150 Marines had established a neutral zone around the town. In the meantime, the Chinese government, following the example of Belgium and Italy, formally requested that the United States extend protection to its citizens in Nicaragua. Finally, on 27 March, the Constitutionalists fired upon one of Major Rowell's aircraft.

As Stimson saw it, elections were the crux of the matter. Only by insuring a fair count could the endless series of rebellions be brought to a halt. After arranging for a truce, the American envoy talked with leaders of both factions. Neither the Constitutionalists nor the Diaz government objected to American supervision of the 1928 election. Sacasa insisted that Diaz be replaced by a nonpartisan President until after the election. Since it was obvious that no such disinterested party existed, the United States remained adamant in its resolve that Diaz continue in office.

In brief, the Stimson-Diaz plan of reconstruction called for the surrender of weapons by both sides, a general amnesty, and restoration of confiscated property. The Liberals would participate in the Diaz cabinet until the American-supervised election of 1928. In the meantime, while a Nicaraguan constabulary was being trained, a force of Marines sufficient to maintain order would be kept in the country. The only feature found objectionable by Sacasa was the temporary retention of Diaz as President. To break this stalemate, Stimson decided to confer with General Moncada.

Meeting with Stimson in a neutral zone along the Tipitapa River, the Constitutionalist general admitted that his victory over the government forces would not restore order to Nicaragua. Neither party, he went on, could bring peace to the nation without American aid. For this reason, he did not want to disrupt the American plan of reconstruction even though he wished to see Diaz removed at once from the Presidency. When Stimson insisted that Diaz remain until the election, Moncada yielded. Later, Sacasa agreed to cooperate, and the crisis seemed ended.(54)

At the time of his departure for the United States, 22 May 1927, Stimson realized that many Nicaraguans were not satisfied with the settlement. The ultra-Conservatives felt Diaz had been too soft on their enemies, while some die-hard Liberals considered Moncada a traitor. The great majority, however, was overjoyed that the costly war had ended. As Stimson well realized, a major stumbling block on the road to peace was disarmament. Moncada had warned the American that he could not possibly control all of the irregular forces enlisted in the Constitutionalist cause. Together with President Diaz, Moncada issued an appeal for additional Marines to disarm the rival armies; and between 17 and 22 May, the 11th Regiment, organized at the time as infantry, and VO-4M landed at Corinto.(55)

On the surface, all seemed calm. By 26 May, the Liberals had turned in 11,600 rifles, 303 machine guns, and 5,500,000 rounds of ammunition.(56) Nevertheless, there were plenty of indications of turbulence to come. On 16 May, a band of outlaws, a fragment of the rebel army, raided the village of La Paz. No sooner had the bandits begun their looting than a detachment of Marines, led by Captain Richard B. Buchanan, charged along the main street to meet them. In routing the outlaws, Captain Buchanan and Private Marvin A. Jackson were killed. Roving bandits and irrational political loyalty could combine to keep Nicaragua in turmoil for years to come.

Work with a Nicaraguan constabulary was proceeding slowly. Organization of this important force began on 8 May 1927, when President Diaz requested that an American officer be assigned to instruct the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua. Four days later, Colonel Robert Y. Rhea took over as instructor, and on 24 May, the first recruit took the oath of enlistment. There was, however, no great rush to the colors. Coffee picking season discouraged men from volunteering as did the ban on political activity by members of the Guardia, but the greatest handicap to recruiting was the fact that Nicaraguan governments seldom paid their private soldiers. In the past, it had been the custom of officers to keep the money given them to pay their troops. It took a high degree of salesmanship to convince prospective soldiers that the old order had indeed passed away. In spite of these difficulties, the Guardia Nacional was able to order its first company into the field on 1 July 1927. By the end of the month, the unit was to undergo its baptism of fire at Ocotal.

Designed as the police force of the legally constituted government of Nicaragua, the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua was entirely distinct from the Marine Brigade stationed in the country. One division of the Guardia, usually a company in strength, was to be assigned to each of Nicaragua's political departments. Two or more key towns might be administered as a sub-division; and each village of any importance would have its post, a detachment of squad or platoon size. This was an ambitious program that had to be completed before the 1928 election. Colonel Rhea and his successor Colonel Elias R. Beadle toiled toward the day when the Guardia would be able to assume responsibility for maintaining law and order throughout Nicaragua.(57)

While the Guardia was being organized, an uneasy peace settled over Nicaragua. The Liberal army disintegrated into small bands difficult to locate even by aerial reconnaissance. Sometimes a Marine biplane would circle over one of these groups of renegades, report the location, and perhaps return as a ground patrol arrived at the scene to disarm the Nicaraguans; but many an unemployed trooper drifted north toward the Honduran border still clutching his rifle and bandolier.

Along the northern border of Nicaragua lay the departments of Neuva Segovia, Esteli, Jinotega, and Cabo Gracias a Dios on the Caribbean coast. Sparsely populated, given over to coffee plantations, a few mines, and small farms, these states were the Nicaraguan equivalent of America's Wild West. In time of peace, law was seldom enforced in this area; in time of revolution, never. During the recent war, some of the outlaw bands had been incorporated into Moncada's army, while others had carried on business as usual. In addition, some of the "generals" dispatched across

the border by Sacasa proved adept at pillage as they drifted south to join Moncada. Now the fighting had ended, but these men were in no mood to surrender their weapons, their only means of livelihood.

Cabulla, one of the more notorious bandits, erred fatally, when at El Viejo, on 26 May, he drew a pistol against Captain William P. Richards, one of the best shots in the Marine Corps; but there were others to carry on in his stead. Somoto in Neuva Segovia became the haunt of one Salgado, "an illiterate Indian of very average instincts," fat, barefoot, and nearly fifty. A onetime laborer on a coffee plantation was Centeno, another bandit chieftain, who loyally insisted upon operating near his home town of Yali. A veritable intellectual among the illiterate renegades, Jose Diaz, had wandered across the border of Nicaragua. This cruel, bull-necked bandit seldom ventured far to the south.(58)

Sandino Appears on the Scene

Formidable as these were, none of these bandits would be called the most feared man in Nicaragua; for that title could be claimed only by Augusto C. Sandino. Of medium height, slender, almost frail in appearance, Sandino did not look like a practicing criminal. As a matter of fact, he was not a mere outlaw but rather a zealot in the cause of Nicaraguan Liberalism. A native of Nicaragua, he left for Mexico while still a young man. There, he toiled for a time in the oil fields, then joined Pancho Villa's band of rebels. During his stay in Mexico, he imbibed a heady draught of Central American nationalism along with the aperitif of social reform. By the time he left Mexico, he had become a fanatic in the cause of Liberalism. Unfortunately, members of that party refused to accept him.

In May 1926, Sandino raised the flag of rebellion against the Chamorro government. After numerous brushes with government troops, he marched his band of 40 men to Puerto Cabezas, where he obtained 40 rifles and a supply of ammunition from one of Moncada's satellite generals. Thus equipped, the band marched westward and wrested the town of Jinotega from government troops. Shortly before the armistice, Sandino joined Moncada's forces and, on the strength of his victory, was welcomed as a brother in arms.

At the time of Stimson's mission to Nicaragua, Sandino apparently was not as vehemently opposed to the United States as he later became. Like many other Liberals, he felt that a fair election, even if supervised by American Marines, would automatically insure the victory of his party. When Stimson insisted that Diaz continue in office as interim President until the next election, Sandino balked. Refusing to turn in his weapons as Moncada had ordered, he struck out toward the fastness of Neuva Segovia. He was determined to crush the Marines, rally the Liberals behind him, and destroy forever Conservative power in Nicaragua. Moncada branded the rebel as a bandit, a name which was adopted by the Marines.

During the time that Sandino was gathering strength to resist the Americans, Marines of the Second Brigade continued to patrol the Nicaraguan countryside. Gradually, the Brigade inched its tentacles into bandit territory to determine just what course of action Sandino would follow. In May, after Sandino had been served with an ultimatum to surrender, a Marine patrol, led by Captain Gilbert D. Hatfield, left Matagalpa to probe the territory of Neuva Segovia.

Hatfield's patrol established a post at Ocotal and settled down to await Sandino's next move. In July, the First Company, Guardia National de Nicaragua, arrived at Ocotal to bring the strength of the garrison to 3 Marine officers, 2 officers of the Guardia, 38 enlisted Marines, and 48 native Nicaraguan guardsmen. The townspeople, most of them in sympathy with Sandino, carefully kept their distance. Valuables disappeared from sight, as a pall of impending doom settled over Ocotal.

Captain Hatfield read these portents correctly. On 15 July, he doubled the guard and prepared his men for the worst. The worst was not long in coming. Throughout the evening, Sandino's rebels, by twos and threes, slipped quietly into Ocotal. At 0115, 16 July, a Marine sentry saw something moving in the shadowy street and fired the first shot of the engagement.

The advantage of surprise lost, the rebels attacked at once; but in the first few minutes, three headlong rushes were beaten back by the Marines. The rebels fell back to regroup; only the sporadic crack of snipers' bullets broke the tense silence of the night. As the sun soared into the sky, both sides again cut loose with every available weapon. At about 0800, the rebels demanded Hatfield's surrender. His refusal to yield brought no all-out assault; instead, firing gradually tapered off until only Sandino's snipers remained active.

Daylight also had brought Marine aircraft. Two planes circled Ocotal at midmorning. After interpreting the panels laid out by Hatfield, Lieutenant Hayne Boyden landed near Ocotal, collared a local peasant, and from him learned the seriousness of the situation. He then climbed back into the plane and, after a few quick passes, returned to Managua to get help. Meanwhile, Chief Marine Gunner Michael Wodarczyk had kept strafing the rebels until his ammunition was exhausted.

This aerial foray gave the rebels a taste of what was to come. At 1435, a flight of five DeHavillands, led by Major Ross E. Rowell, appeared over Ocotal. Each plane carried a load of bombs, a tactical innovation unknown to Sandino's horde. Steeling themselves for another strafing attack, the rebels were stupified as the fragile biplanes nosed over at an altitude of a thousand feet. Most of the rebels fled from the bombing attack; but a handful continued firing from behind a stone wall until outflanked by Hatfield's men. The bodies of 56 rebels were recovered. Approximately twice that number were wounded. Marine losses were surprisingly light considering the initial fury of the assault: one dead and five wounded.(59)

Actually, the attack on the Ocotal garrison did not hit General Feland as a complete surprise. On 2 July, Rear Admiral Julian L. Latimer had ordered General Feland to take the offensive against the bandits. A strong patrol--some 225 Marines and Guardias--under Major Oliver Floyd, had been given the task of spearheading the operation. Because of time lost in rounding up enough pack animals and bull-carts, the expedition did not get underway until 15 July. Its destination was the San Albino Mine, which Sandino had seized and apparently was operating.

In spite of the knowledge that Sandino was in control of the greater part of Nueva Segovia, the Americans continued to look upon him as just another border outlaw and, as a result, underestimated both his strength and the zeal of his followers. This attitude helps explain the fact that during the month of July, the 11th Regiment ceased its operations and sailed from Nicaragua for the United States.

Sandino, however, was more than an outlaw. On 17 July, while at Trinidad, Major Floyd learned of the encounter at Ocotal. Dividing the patrol, Floyd sent 50 men off toward Ocotal. Once the entire group had arrived there, the Neuva Segovia expedition would begin a series of patrol operations designed to scatter and demoralize the bandits. Riding boldly into the untamed territory, Floyd's men found themselves completely on their own. Afraid of both bandits and Americans, fiercely loyal to Sandino, the native population melted away to the hills as the column approached.

Near the town of San Fernando, the Marines ran into an ambush manned by about 40 Sandinistas. One Marine was wounded and 11 rebels were killed. Another clash occurred after the expedition had cleared San Fernando, but Jicaro was occupied without meeting opposition. On 1 August, the expedition arrived at the mines. Sandino had vanished. Intelligence officers of the 5th Regiment, however, had learned of a place called El Chipote, a mountain fortress which served as Sandino's lair; and Floyd was ordered to discover and attack the stronghold.

Upon reaching San Albino, Floyd began questioning the villagers. He may have misinterpreted their comments, or they may have been covering for Sandino; at any rate, the Major reached the conclusion that El Chipote was purely imaginary, a mere symbol of the rebel leader's might. Nevertheless, Marine patrols doggedly scoured the countryside to no avail. Since the approaching rainy season would disrupt his line of supply and because his command was by no means self-sustaining, Floyd decided to withdraw as soon as possible. On 14 August, the Major posted a garrison under 1st Lieutenant George J. O'Shea at Jicaro and left for Ocotal. After turning the expedition over to Captain Victor F. Bleasdale, he departed for Managua, secure in his belief that Sandino's power had been crushed.(60)

In spite of the presence of a garrison at Jicaro, the region was not yet pacified. Not even the most vigilant patrols could turn up any trace of Sandino, but there was one brush with the rebels on 18 August near the village of Murra.(61)

A 21-man patrol, under 1st Lieutenant George J. O'Shea, started from Jicaro along the trail toward Quilali. Late in the afternoon of 1 September, while still about five miles from Quilali, the patrol spotted riflemen moving along the trail. Others were flushed from a house about 1,000 yards distant. The Marines camped for the night about two miles from Quilali. Early the following morning, a handful of rebels were spotted prowling the outskirts of the camp. An alert sentry drove them off into the underbrush. O'Shea's approach to the town was cautious. At the edge of Quilali, the Marines fired on four natives, each with a rifle, who were leading a pack mule. Cutting loose their supplies, the rebels fled with the animal. In the abandoned pack were supplies destined for Sandino. A search of the deserted houses disclosed copies of Sandino's latest proclamations and a letter to the rebels' leader from his quartermaster.

On 3 September, the patrol returned to Jicaro. All along the route, farm houses lay empty. There were no men to be found in the region. All this evidence pointed to a massing of rebel strength near Quilali. O'Shea himself was now convinced that Chipote indeed was a fortress. Although the local inhabitants would tell him nothing, the Marine officer guessed that the encampment was situated on the flat land between the base of a hill on the Murra River and the village of Manchones. Most certainly, the hill itself served as Sandino's redoubt.(62)

Gradually, the truth was dawning. The Americans, Marines and diplomats, in Nicaragua were coming to realize that Sandino had a great deal of popular support in the wild northern provinces. Even though they persisted in calling him a bandit, they recognized that he was a rebel determined to overthrow the coalition government. The initiative lay with Sandino, secure in his stronghold at Chipote. In mid-September he was to strike again.

Some two hundred rebels, led by Sandino's most trusted lieutenants, collected on the outskirts of the village of Telpaneca. Stationed in the town were 20 Marines and 25 soldiers of the Guardia Nacional, under the command of 1st Lieutenant Herbert S. Keimling. At 0100 on the morning of 19 September, one of Sandino's men tossed a homemade dynamite bomb toward the rear of the Marines' quarters. The blast shook the men from their bunks. As they were scrambling into their clothes, the enemy opened fire.

Two groups of rebels charged the buildings where the defenders were quartered, but they were beaten back. Both Guardia and Marines had held firm in spite of the initial surprise. The fog began to lift at about 0230, and within half an hour the enemy had begun to collect his dead and wounded. By dawn, all was quiet. During the fight, one Marine had been killed; a second died of wounds the same day. One member of the Guardia was seriously wounded. As nearly as Lieutenant Keimling could tell, about 25 of Sandino's troops had been killed and twice that number wounded.(63)

Although Marine infantry and foot soldiers of the Guardia had done most of the fighting and dying that summer, Leatherneck aviators were far from idle. Theirs was no easy life. Maps, inadequate even for ground reconnaissance, could easily prove fatal to the pilot of a fragile biplane, low on fuel, limping over the hostile mountains. The same terrain which proved a constant worry to aviators was an impossible obstacle to supply specialists. Twisting trails, steep grades, and dense underbrush ideal for ambush combined to make life for the quartermaster a prolonged nightmare. With garrisons scattered all over Neuva Segovia, patrols constantly on the move, and the better trails impassable except to bull carts, a large share of the burden of supply, communication, and scouting had to be shouldered by Marine aviation.

Little could be done in the way of carrying bulk supplies during the summer of 1927, for the creaking DeHavillands simply were not big enough. In December of that year, the Brigade was lucky enough to obtain a trimotor Fokker transport capable of hauling 1,300 pounds of cargo. By 29 August 1928, five of these rugged craft were in service. Everything from cigarettes to mules were delivered by air; in fact, some remote outposts received payrolls by airdrop.

As far as the initial phase of the campaign was concerned, the contributions of aviation lay mainly in the fields of combat support, as at Ocotal, communications, and scouting. By displaying cloth panels in a pre-arranged manner, a ground detachment could call for supplies, air support, medical assistance, or simply inform the pilot that there was no change in the situation. True, it often was difficult to locate a handful of khaki-clad men moving along a dusty trail; but all in all, the airplane provided a vital link in the system of communication. Less successful was aerial reconnaissance. Sandino's men were adept at camouflage. Seldom did they move in large groups, and, if at all possible, they marched at night.(64)

Victims to the cruel Nicaraguan school of warfare were 2d Lieutenant Earl A. Thomas and Sergeant Frank E. Dowdell. While patrolling east of Quilali on 8 October 1927, their plane and another piloted by Gunner Michael Wodarczyk attacked one of Sandino's pack trains. The rebels fired back with rifles. Apparently Thomas' plane was hit, for 15 minutes later, at a point three miles west of Quilali and one mile south of the Jicaro River, his craft crashed and burst into flames. Wodarczyk swooped low over the wreckage, dropped them a map, and notified the garrisons at both Jicaro and Ocotal of their plight.

At 1220, roughly three hours after the crash, reconnaissance aircraft circled the area. Save for the charred skeleton of the plane, they saw nothing. Trails were deserted; there was not a living thing within miles of the wreckage. Neither Thomas nor Dowdell was seen again. What was their fate? As nearly as Marine intelligence officers could determine, the pair had left the scene of the crash to avoid capture. Nearby, they had encountered two natives and forced them to lead them towards Jicaro. The guides turned on them, and one of the fliers was wounded. Carrying his injured companion, the unwounded aviator made his way to a cave. There Sandino's men found them.(65)

When Gunner Wodarczyk's plane screamed low over Jicaro and dropped its urgent message, the greater part of the garrison was absent on a routine patrol to Ocotal. Realizing that the fliers were in grave danger, Lieutenant O'Shea, the local commander, recalled the column. O'Shea decided not to wait for the return of the Ocotal patrol; and at 1245, little more than an hour after he had received the message, he rode out of Jicaro. With him were Navy Surgeon John B. O'Neill, 8 Marines, and 10 members of the Guardia Nacional.

The following morning, the relief expedition reached a point three miles northwest of Quilali and halted to await further instructions from reconnaissance planes. Within a short time, a message came tumbling down informing him that the plane lay on Sapotillal Ridge, only three miles distant in a straight line to the northwest. Map distance, however, meant nothing in Nicaragua. O'Shea had to march for three and a quarter hours before reaching the base of the ridge. Slowly the patrol eased its way up the slope. The point had moved about one hundred yards, when the enemy opened fire. A force numbering about two hundred stood between the Marines and their objective.

Since there was plenty of cover, the officer had decided to advance by fire and maneuver; but before he could make his move, a smaller group of Sandinistas, located on a rise about one hundred yards to his right rear, began blazing away. Training and discipline paid off, as O'Shea wheeled his men about and attacked the smaller force. Firing as they moved, the Marines and Guardia hammered their way out of the trap.

Definitely on the defensive now, O'Shea struck out along the devious trail that led eventually to San Albino. So far, Lieutenant O'Shea had clung tenaciously to the trail; and for good reason, since his compass was lost and his native guides had vanished amid the confusion of battle. Before reinforcements could be hurled against him, the lieutenant veered sharply to the left and led his men into a steep ravine. Swallowed up by the brush-choked gulch, the patrol slipped undetected through the rebel cordon. With the aid of a food-drop on the morning of 10 October, the ill-fated patrol arrived at Jicaro later that day.(66)

The opposition which had greeted O'Shea's column was proof that the fortress of Chipote did indeed exist. Furthermore, the estimate of rebel strength was doubled to 400. Colonel Louis M. Gulick, who had succeeded General Feland as Brigade commander, now expected a long and difficult campaign. At Sapotilla, the

enemy had fought bravely; and this one taste of success, even though bought at high cost, would whet his appetite for war. Aided by the terrain--raging rivers, narrow trails, rugged mountains, and dense cover--400 determined men could tie up an army many times their number. There was, however, one bright spot in an otherwise somber picture, for the Guardia had fought expertly. If enough volunteers could be found, this organization could prove of immense value in putting down Sandino's rebellion.(67)

Although realizing that the two downed airmen were probably beyond help, Marine commanders were determined, at least, to learn their fate. Two separate patrols were dispatched to the area. One, composed of 25 enlisted Marines, 3 Guardia officers, and 40 Nicaraguan troops under the command of 1st Lieutenant Moses J. Gould; the second group, led by Lieutenant Clarence J. Chappell.

Not until 30 October was Gould able to reach the site of the crash. The machine guns had been removed, but the motor and other metal parts were intact. All fabric, of course, had been burned. The following day, the combined patrols passed through Quilali. On the morning of 1 November, near the village of Espino some six miles southeast of Jicaro. Gould's column tangled with a force of about 250 rebels. Save for one man nicked in the arm by fragments from a dynamite bomb, the Marines emerged unscathed from the 35-minute fire fight. The Guardia detachment, commanded by 2d Lieutenant Robert E. Hogaboom, was not so fortunate for two of its members were killed by rifle fire. The enemy was thought to have lost 60 killed and wounded.(68)

The Marines, however, were not always on the defensive. On the morning of 10 November, the detachment of Telpaneca learned that Porfirio Sanchez with 40 rebels was camping near San Juan, only ten miles distant. A patrol under Lieutenant J.H. Satterfield,G.N.,located the camp and at 0500, attacked. Five rebels were killed at no loss to the attackers.(69)

In addition to pacifying the outlying provinces, Marines also were called upon to supervise the local elections held along the east coast beginning in November. The most interesting result of these contests was the fact that local Liberals became fast friends of the Marines. The reason was obvious. Since the election was at least moderately honest, the more numerous Liberals could not help but win. A final tribute to the impartiality and zeal of the Marines, who kept order along the coast, came on 6 January 1928, when the victorious Liberals, many of them men who had opposed the intervention, petitioned President Diaz to place a Marine officer in charge of the Bluefields police department.(70)

The Grand Offensive Against Sandino

Success along the coast, unfortunately, did not mean triumph in the interior. Frequent clashes occurred between rebel bands and Marine patrols. It had become evident that Sandino had no intention of surrendering until he had been driven from Chipote. D-Day for what was hoped would be the final offensive against the rebels was set for 17 December. In all, some 200 troops were earmarked for this expedition which was to be composed of two strong combat patrols.(71)

Preparing for the grand offensive was not a simple task, for Sandino had no intention of calling off the war while the Marines concentrated their forces at Quilali. First of all, there was a troublesome rebel column drifting around the countryside near Telpaneca. After marching by the light of a bright tropical moon, a Marine-Guardia patrol, led by 2d Lieutenant Wilburt S. Brown, located the enemy in a farmhouse near El Portero. Four of the enemy were killed.(72)

Another source of trouble was the area around Somoto. On 11 December, in a driving rainstorm, eight Marines, led by Corporal George Lukshides, collided with a handful of rebels, some of them mounted, on the outskirts of San Isabel. One of the enemy toppled dead from his saddle, and others may have been wounded. The patrol emerged intact from the brief action.(73)

These minor clashes merely served to emphasize the need to destroy El Chipote; but the expedition did not get underway until 19 December, when one patrol, under Captain Richard Livingston, cleared Jinotega for Quilali and Chipote and another, under Guardia 1st Lieutenant Merton A. Richal, left Telpaneca for the same objectives. The location of Sandino's hideout no longer was a secret. O'Shea and Gould had scouted the general area; and on 23 November, Major Ross E. Rowell had flown over the mountain, led bombing and strafing runs, and pinpointed the enemy entrenchments. The preliminaries were over; ahead lay a grim fight to the finish.

Livingston was to join Richal in Quilali. South of the town, the trail winds its way along the lower slopes of a steep, thickly wooded ridge. On the left is the Jicaro River. Livingston had marched to a point on this trail about 1,500 yards south of Quilali when, on 30 December, the rebels struck.

No attempt was made to rush the trapped column, and after 80 minutes of heavy firing, they retired. Two Marine planes then appeared overhead to strafe possible routes of enemy withdrawal; but it was too late, for Sandino's horde of 200 or more, vanished completely. The enemy, fighting under superb discipline from cunningly concealed positions, had killed five Marines and two members of the Guardia. Twenty-three Leathernecks and two of the Nicaraguan contingent were wounded.

In the meantime, the Richal patrol was faring no better. The other column, just 22 miles beyond Telpaneca, was ambushed by some 50 bandits. This proved to be mere harassment; for after about 20 minutes, the enemy withdrew. One Marine was seriously wounded. It is unlikely that Sandino's party suffered any casualties.

This brush with the rebels was a taste of the battle that was to come. On New Year's Day, 1928, the column was strung out along the San Albino-Quilali trail about six miles northwest of the latter town. The point was at the base of the Las Cruces Hill and the rear guard near an unnamed rise, when 1st Sergeant Thomas G. Bruce, a 1st Lieutenant of the Guardia, saw something move on the slopes of Las Cruces. Before he could draw his pistols, dynamite bombs burst amid the column as machine-gun bullets ricocheted off the trail. Bruce was killed at once. Demoralized by his death, the point fell back in the face of an enemy charge. Although the Marines' machine gun jammed, a Stokes mortar and a 37mm gun were brought to bear on the hillside. Richal himself was wounded at this critical instant, but Gunnery Sergeant Edward G. Brown was able to organize an attack up Las Cruces. Pounded by mortar shells, their breastworks shattered by the light gun, the rebels fell back. Once the crest was in their hands, the Marines settled down to await reinforcements.

Help was not long in coming. First, there was an air strike a few moments after the hill had been captured. The planes strafed the surrounding woods, but they alone could not clear a route of advance to Quilali. That task fell to a reinforced rifle platoon, led by 2d Lieutenant A. T. Hunt, which had left Quilali earlier in the day to aid Richal in case of ambush. Alerted to the state of affairs at Las Cruces by a reconnaissance plane, Hunt pushed on to reach the beleaguered patrol at 1415.

That night, the Marines on Las Cruces remained in their defensive positions. After an early morning air-drop of water and of nails for the building of stretchers, they started toward Quilali. The combined patrols reached the town without drawing enemy fire.(74)

Next, the Sandinistas laid siege to Quilali. Approximately 30 wounded, some of them in desperate need of further medical attention, were in the town. There was neither time nor men to organize a relief column. Worse yet, there was no airstrip at Quilali. It was vital, however, that medicine be flown in and casualties evacuated; so 1st Lieutenant Christian F. Schilt volunteered for the mission.

At Quilali, the embattled Marines leveled walls to lengthen the main street for a landing field. Schilt's plane, a Vought O2U-1 "Corsair," had been re-equipped with wheels from a DeHavilland aircraft and had no brakes. Each time he touched down on the makeshift runway. Marines ran forward to seize hold of the wings and, with their added weight, slow the rolling plane. In spite of this mechanical failing, enemy fire, and low-hanging clouds, Schilt was able to touch down safely on the rugged roadway. On 6, 7, and 8 January 1928, the lieutenant made a total of ten flights into Qualali, carrying a total of 1,400 pounds of medicine and supplies. In all, 18 wounded were flown to Ocotal. Of these, threeewould certainly have died had they not received prompt medical attention. Lieutenant Schilt was awarded the Medal of Honor for these heroic accomplishments.(75)

The expedition against Chipote was a failure. By 10 January, Richal's and Livingston's patrols were on their way back to San Albino. Yet, the picture was not entirely black; for on 8 January, a patrol operating from Telpaneca had overwhelmed still another rebel detachment. Commanded by a Honduran, Alejandro Ferrera, the Sandinistas spotted the 20 Marines and 10 Guardia as Lieutenant J. H. Satterfield was leading them toward the enemy camp. Fortunately, Satterfield, a veteran of other guerrilla actions, was too clever to stumble blindly into a trap. Leaving the trail, he maneuvered to force Ferrera's men to disclose their positions. His tactics succeeded, and most of the rebels fled under concentrated fire of the maneuver element. The rest were driven into the underbrush when Satterfield's base of fire came into action. Because surprise had been lost, no prisoners were taken, but the rebels had to abandon some arms and ammunition as well as a large amount of food. Five of the enemy were killed in this encounter.(76)

The image of Chipote, nevertheless, still haunted the Brigade commander. Originally, ground forces, with the support of aviation, were to play the major role in eliminating Sandino's stronghold. Now, the drama was recast with Marine fliers in the starring role. Aggressive patrolling was to force the enemy to concentrate at the mountain redoubt; when the proper moment arrived, planes would try to bomb him into submission.

On 14 January, while a strong patrol, under Major Archibald Young, was moving relentlessly down the trail from San Albino, Major Ross E. Rowell launched the blow designed to demolish the crude fortress.

Several hundred rebels were clustered atop El Chipote when the four-plane flight led by Major Rowell appeared overhead. Two planes pounced upon the northern half of the mountain, while the other struck to the south. This was no repetition of the Ocotal "cakewalk," for Sandino had learned at last the rudiments of anti-aircraft defense. A hail of rifle and machine-gun fire greeted the attackers as Rowell's plane whined low over the stronghold.

Engine trouble forced Rowell to break off the action after he had dropped his two bombs and fired only 200 rounds of machine-gun ammunition. The other pilots continued to press home the attack. In all, 2,800 rounds of machine-gun ammunition ripped into the hilltop, while four 50-pound demolition and eighteen 17-pound fragmentation bombs burst among Sandino's horde. Still another weapon employed by the Leathernecks was the white phosphorous hand grenade. A dozen of these were tossed over the side by the gunner-observers.(77)

Major Young's patrol began probing the heights of Chipote on 20 January. Although aerial patrols had reported Chipote to be deserted, the ground troops did encounter some opposition. These outposts were quickly overcome, but the major chose to move cautiously, a wise decision in the light of past events. On 26 January, the patrol had reached the crest. Although a quantity of supplies were captured, Sandino and his main body had escaped.(78)

Reinforcements in the form of the 11th Marine Regiment began arriving at Corinto on 15 January 1928, and on the following day, Brigadier General Logan Feland resumed command of the brigade. The troublesome border states were incorporated into the Northern Area, a special military zone under the command of Colonel Robert H. Dunlap. His task was to locate and destroy the rebel and outlaw bands which had been scattered by the attack on Chipote.(79)

During January, Marine patrols from San Albino continued to comb the area around Chipote, but they found no trace of Sandino. The towns of Yali and San Rafael del Norte, both favorite haunts of the rebel leader, were garrisoned during the first week of February; but even this did not provoke an attack.

A pack train guarded by Marines was returning empty from Yali to Esteli on the afternoon of 27 February. One hundred yards west of the tiny village of Bromaderos, a dozen bullets cracked over the head of 1st Lieutenant Edward F. O'Day, the officer in charge. The 35 Marines and their mule drivers took cover. Easing to the left of the trail, they worked their way to the crest of a small ridge. From this excellent position, they managed to break up two enemy attacks, neither of which was well planned or aggressively executed.

While O'Day's column was being attacked, a powerful combat patrol was moving toward Yali. Captain William K. MacNulty had 88 Marines under his command, a sufficient force to accomplish his mission of suppressing rebel activity along the route to Yali. At dawn of 28 February, reinforcements reached the beleaguered O'Day. Although MacNulty's patrol had suffered no casualties, three were killed and ten wounded in the other group. Two more were to die before they could be evacuated. Enemy losses were placed at 10 dead and 30 wounded.(80)

Following the action at Bromaderos, there was a lull in ground operations; but Marine aviators continued to press the offensive. Late in the morning of 18 March, two planes were fired upon while circling low over the town of Murra on a reconnaissance mission.

On the following day, a two-plane patrol was fired upon from a house one-half mile northeast of Murra. Bombs and machine-gun fire silenced this hostile outpost, but as the biplanes swung to the south of the town, they were fired upon once more. Two bands of rebels were located, strafed, and bombed; but the action was broken off when Captain Francis E. Pierce, an aerial observer, was shot through the foot. Certain that the officer was in danger of bleeding to death, Gunner Michael Wodarczyk led the flight to Ocotal, where Pierce was given medical aid.

Throughout the afternoon, Marine planes shuttled back and forth over the town. At least nine separate rebel groups were bombed or strafed. On the following morning, careful aerial reconnaissance could find no signs of hostile activities. The number killed could not be determined; but as the scouting planes banked over the outskirts of Murra, the noise of their motors sent a startled flock of vultures soaring skyward.(81)

Operations in the East

Harassed by aerial attack and under unremitting pressure from ground patrols, the rebels began drifting eastward from Neuva Segovia. Major Harold H. Utley, who had assumed command of Marine forces along the east coast of Nicaragua late in January, had predicted that the enemy would move in his direction once Chipote had fallen.

Upon assuming command over the Eastern Area, Utley had listened attentively as 1st Lieutenant Merritt A. Edson unfolded a plan, formulated by several junior officers, for crushing Sandino and his faithful followers. The key to the solution of the rebel problem was the Coco River, which meandered from the highlands around El Chipote to Cape Gracias a' Dios. Why not throw up a defensive screen across the lower part of the stream and send a strong patrol upriver into the heart of rebel country? Caught in this pincers movement, the Sandinistas could either surrender or fall back into Honduras. Even if they chose the latter course, they would be unable to meddle in the coming election.

Major Utley was impressed with the idea of a Coco River offensive. The major difficulty, however, was the terrain. None of the standard maps of Nicaragua cast much light on the Coco River basin. It was obvious to Utley that a detailed reconnaissance would be necessary before he could launch his attack. Edson, recently promoted to Captain, was ordered to take five men from the Marine detachment, USS Denver and move upstream to the village of Huaspuc. How far he should move beyond that point was left to Edson's discretion.

On the morning of 8 March 1928, the patrol chugged westward from Cape Gracias in the Zambita, a 16-foot, flat bottomed launch powered by a motor salvaged from a Model T Ford. Edson attempted to force his way beyond Huaspuc, but reports that Sandino's agents were drumming up recruits as far downstream as Bocay caused him to change his mind. The patrol returned at once to Cape Gracias, arriving there on 26 March. As a result of this reconnaissance, Edson became convinced that a strong force based at Huaspuc could deny the lower reaches of the river to the rebels.

Early in April, Major Utley began establishing a series of small garrisons in the Coco watershed near Cape Gracias. Under Captain John A. Tebbs, the Marine detachment of the USS Tulsa was sent up the Bambana River to reconnoiter the mining district around San Pedro Pis Pis. Edson himself was assigned the task of

blocking the Coco River at Huaspuc. Before these plans could be carried out, the rebels struck. On 6 April, Utley learned that Marcos Aguerro, driving down the river toward Cape Gracias, was at Sansang. Edson, 2d Lieutenant Jesse S. Cook, Jr., and 37 Marines were to move at once to Huaspuc.

Boarding the ancient cruiser Galveston at Puerto Cabezas, the patrol reached the mouth of the Coco shortly before noon of the following day. Most of the residents of Cape Gracias were reluctant to help the Americans. If the rebels should slip past the outpost at Huaspuc and seize their city, everyone who had helped the Americans would suffer.

By evening, Edson had his boats, and the patrol was on its way to Huaspuc. On 10 April, an outpost was established at Saclin, and four days later the main body reached Huaspuc. There, he learned of a raid on the gold mines at San Pedro Pis Pis; but he was powerless to intervene, since there was no trail leading from Huaspuc to the danger area.

Aerial support of Edson's patrol posed a difficult problem. Aircraft also were needed in the Northern Area, but planes based there were too far distant to patrol the Coco basin. Major Rowell's aviators began operating from Puerto Cabezas late in April, and on the 28th, two Corsairs, flown by Lieutenants Schilt and Vernon M. Guymon, touched down on a sandbar near the village of Sansang.

Reinforcements, 20 Marines and 1 Navy pharmacist led by 2d Lieutenant Milo Carroll, arrived at Huaspuc on 1 May. Most important of all, Carroll had with him a workable radio. At long last, Edson was able to learn what had happened since his band started upriver. The Tulsa detachment, reinforced by members of the 51st Company, had been dispatched inland to protect the mines at San Pedro Pis Pis. Upon learning that a greatly superior rebel force was approaching, Captain Tebbs was unable to find a good defensive position and led his Marines back to Puerto Cabezas.

While Tebbs had been attempting to make contact with them, the rebels had looted the Neptune and Lone Star Mines at La Luz. At last, Major Utley knew the location of the enemy. Determined to bottle up and destroy the rebels, he ordered Tebbs to defend Puerto Cabezas and sent two combat patrols toward the mines. For Edson, he reserved the task of preventing the raiders from escaping across the Honduran border.

It was noon of 3 May, when he regained radio contact with Puerto Cabezas, before Edson learned of his new mission. He was to move at once up the Huaspuc River to its junction with Kuabul Creek and there wait in ambush for the retreating bandits. Leaving outposts at Awasbila and Huaspuc, the captain, 31 Marines, and a pharmacist mate started off toward Kuabul on 4 May.

Early on the morning of 7 May, the Marines arrived at Kuabul. Leaving a handful of men to guard their boats, they pushed along the Musawas Trail to Great Falls, where they laid their ambush. After being informed that two amphibians which had just arrived at Puerto Cabezas soon would be on their way to contact him, Edson returned to Kuabul to wait for them. Lacking regular signal panels, the Marines spread their undershirts along a sandbar to point out the direction from which the enemy was supposed to be approaching. The flight arrived on schedule, but because the thick jungle screened the twisting trails from aerial observers, Edson learned nothing from this source.

The rebels apparently had no intention of moving northward. Since a second Marine patrol, this one led by 1st Lieutenant Donald Taft, was moving into position athwart the Coco, Edson was free to strike out in search of Aguerro. Until 20 May, his Marines hacked their way through the jungles around Musawas village without making contact with the enemy.

In the meantime, Major Utley had ordered three additional patrols into the interior. The group led by Captain Herbert Rose was to garrison the San Pedro Pis Pis mines and probe to the southwest along the Matagalpa trail. The mission assigned the second, under Captain Wesley W. Walker, was to take over the Huaspuc outpost. Captain Henry D. Linscott, leader of the third, was to push westward toward Bocay.

According to Utley's plan, Captain Walker's patrol was to deliver supplies to Edson's group and leave his pack animals there. This much was accomplished on 20 May, but the second phase of the plan proved more difficult to execute. Linscott's column, travelling overland, was to hack its way through the jungle to reach Casa Viejas at about the same time. Such a task, difficult even for seasoned troops, was impossible for a band of men fresh from the recruit depot, most of whom had enlisted to become field musics. As Captain Linscott's men worked their painful way westward, Captain Edson grew impatient.

Musawa was a pesthole, and the hard-charging Edson did not relish the idea of becoming a part of its garrison; nor did he want the enemy to escape. Acting on his own initiative, he pushed his men toward Bocay. It was a rugged trek. On 28 May, the tired veterans were joined by Captain Linscott's equally weary recruits. Linscott, now in command of both Edson's Denver detachment and his own 60th Company, pushed grimly toward Bocay. He was too late. On 31 May, just one day before the Marines arrived on the scene, the rebel force had passed through Bocay.

On this first Coco River patrol, no more than four of the enemy were wounded. The operation nevertheless was a tactical success, for Sandino was prevented from carrying the war to the east coasts. Deprived of an opportunity to gain recruits and reap a bountiful harvest in booty, the rebel general was forced further back into the wilderness.

Sandino was still alive, still able to weave his magic spell over the peasants of Nicaragua. He had to be broken. While inspecting the garrison at Puerto Cabezas shortly after the return of the first Coco expedition, General Logan Feland discussed with Utley and Edson a plan for thrusting upriver to disperse the enemy concentration at Poteca. Although this new stronghold lay on the eastern edge of Neuva Segovia, it was protected by impenetrable jungles from the Marines of the Northern Area. The only avenue of approach was along the Coco River. Edson, with 2 other officers, 89 enlisted men, and the promise of air support, embarked on the second Coco patrol.

The patrol was to assemble at Bocay in time to start upstream on 23 July, but this schedule proved impossible to meet. It was 26 July before the Marines poled their way westward from Bocay. Instead of 89 men, Edson had but 46 Marines with him. The others, led by Lieutenant Jesse Cook, were to join him as soon as transportation became available.

For the first five days out of Bocay it rained. The Coco, always a swift stream, rose 20 feet to become a raging torrent choked with fragments of huts, logs, and even uprooted trees. The flood temporarily halted Edson, did serious damage to his patrol, and also delayed Cook's move upriver.

At Mastawas on 4 August, the patrol had its first brush with the enemy. Two Sandinistas were seen on the outskirts of the village, but both escaped into the jungle, leaving behind a cache of arms and some letters from various rebel officers. Again, two days later, the Marines traded shots with a handful of rebels on the trail two miles beyond Mastawas. No Americans were hit; however, bloodstains on the underbrush indicated at least one enemy casualty.

Two OL-8 amphibians roared low over the patrol at noon of that same day, to drop mail and 16 sacks of rations. One of the pilots saw signs of a rebel camp about two miles up the Coco River, dropped two bombs, and strafed the area.

Edson pushed cautiously onward with about half his men. The remainder stayed at the drop zone. Patrols were ordered to hack their way along the banks, while the main body followed in boats. This maneuver served its purpose, for the rebel ambush party, was caught completely by surprise when the Leathernecks came lunging through the underbrush. Edson immediately landed with the main body and began organizing a skirmish line. Summoned by a messenger from their position near Ililiquas, the second section was ordered to move up the right bank, while Edson's group was to push along the left. When darkness was approaching, Edson broke contact and ordered his men back to Ililiquas.

This action of 6 August was costly to both sides. One Marines was killed and three wounded. The Sandinistas lost ten known killed and at least three wounded. Worse still from the rebel point of view was the fact that several chieftains had

behaved miserably under fire. Sandino himself had pulled out his men after the bombing attack by Marine OL-8's, and the first rebel to run when the Marines hove into sight had been a colonel.

The second Coco River patrol reached Poteca on 17 August. There had been another fight on 14 August. This action resulted in sudden death for four rebels and the capture of Colonel Abram Rivera, chief of Sandino's transportation service. More important than the taking of the colonel was the seizure of a cargo of hats, clothing, and shoes, items desperately needed by the rebels. Edson's men had more than accomplished their mission. Once again the enemy had been deprived of a base of operations.(82)

During Edson's thrust up the Coco River, the fighting in Neuva Segovia continued. A major engagement occurred at La Flor on 13-14 May, when a Marine-Guardia patrol under Captain Robert S. Hunter collided with an aggressive band of rebels. Apparently neither side was expecting an encounter. While pushing through a ravine, Captain Hunter's point met a part of the enemy advance guard. Once this small group had been driven off, the Marines again pushed forward; but the rebels had gained time to deploy along the trail.

The enemy opened fire with everything he had. Captain Hunter was seriously wounded, and command devolved upon 2d Lieutenant Earl S. Piper. The attackers pulled back before sunset, which enabled the young lieutenant to establish a perimeter defense.

After dawn of 14 May, Lieutenant Piper sent a patrol to reconnoiter the positions which the enemy had abandoned. When it encountered no resistance, he concluded correctly that the rebels had divided their force to block the trail in either direction from his defensive perimeter. Concern for his wounded left him no alternative but to try to break through to the south toward La Flor and Quilali. Piper's route of withdrawal carried him between two hills, Cinco and Ocho; and here the enemy lay in wait. Forty-five minutes of bitter fighting followed.

The patrol reached La Flor coffee plantation on 15 May, and established a strong defensive position. All in all, Piper's men had come through their ordeal in excellent condition. As soon as reinforcements arrived, they would be able to move northward once more; but help was slow im coming. Not until 22 May did a column commanded by Major K. M. Rockey arrive at the plantation.(83)

Momentarily, the Marines had lost the initiative, and the rebels gained a tactical success. This battle, however, did not force the Americans to relax the pressure on Sandino. Caught between the forces in Neuva Segovia and Edson's men in the Coco Valley, Sandino was kept continually on the defensive.

With Sandino temporarily subdued, attention became riveted upon the fast approaching Nicaraguan general election. Prospects for a fair contest had never been brighter. From a military standpoint, the rebels had taken a beating. Although their leader had not lost his old magnetism, the constant pressure applied by combat patrols could prevent the rebels from disrupting the election. Holding the Sandinistas in check would not be a simple task.(84)

The Election of 1928

Difficult as it might be, military operations well might prove less of a problem than policing the polls. The armed enemy had at least been pushed back into the wilderness; but agents of the two political parties were everywhere. In every hamlet were Liberal and Conservative partisans, each in favor of a supervised election--provided only that it was the other party that was supervised.

As far as the Liberals were concerned, the man of destiny was Jose Maria Moncada. With Moncada at the head of the ticket, with Sandino more or less pacified, and with a majority of voters, the Liberals looked hopefully forward to an honest count.

Head of the Conservative organization was ex-President Emiliano Chamorro, but he was ineligible for the nomination. When the nominating convention became deadlocked, President Diaz immediately went into conference with Chamorro. After three and one-half hours, they emerged to announce that Adolfo Benard and Julio Cardenal would head the Conservative ticket.(85)

The election law, drafted under the supervision of Brigadier General Frank R. McCoy of the U. S. Army, was put to a severe test. First came the registration of voters, which lasted from 23 September until 7 October, and it was during this period that the Sandinistas struck. Pedron Altamirano, one of Sandino's henchmen, was given the mission of frightening the Nicaraguans away from the polls. He chose a direct approach to the problem and an effective one.

Altamirano arrived at the village of San Marcos, seven miles northeast of Jinotega, on 2 October. He found four electioneers for the Liberal party campaigning there. All four were dead when the rebels rode out of town. Drifting from town to town, killing indiscriminately, Altamirano could have put an end to registration in northern Nicaragua; but he had not reckoned with Captain Norman M. Shaw and his 45th Company.

Even though his command was scattered throughout the countryside, a few men at each place of registration, Shaw managed to throw out patrols strong enough to discourage the rebels. Not only was Shaw able to screen the polling places, he even forced Altamirano to withdraw into the wilderness. There were no further raids during the election.(86)

The only means of insuring an honest electoral count was to have Marines on the scene wherever ballots were cast. In all some 900 Leathernecks and bluejackets were needed to prevent flagrant corruption. Although an Army, Navy, or Marine Corps officer was responsible for each of Nicaragua's 13 departments, an enlisted man was in sole charge of each of the 432 polling places. The principal threats to the election were riots and repeaters. A few armed Americans or Guardia troops at each village where votes were cast was sufficient to keep order. To prevent repeating, each voter dipped his finger in red ink to show that he already had dropped his ballot in the box. Sandinistas began spreading the rumor that the ink was poisoned, but only a few superstitious Indians believed them.

In spite of Sandino, the election, held on 4 November 1928, was a complete success. About 133,000 votes were cast, almost 50,000 more than in 1924. The Liberal candidates, Moncada and Enoc Aguada, amassed a plurality of 19,000. At long last, the downtrodden Liberals had won.(87)

Both parties admitted that the election had been honest. With the election no longer a cause of interparty strife, the contending factions now battled over a newly discovered issue.

The first order of business facing the new government was the ratification of an agreement between Carlos Cuadras Pasos of Nicaragua and Dana G. Munro of the United States, a compact intended as the legal justification for the Guardia Nacional. Strange to relate, this organization, although it had been in existence for over a year, was not officially sanctioned by Nicaraguan law.

Nor were the Conservatives alone in wishing to exert government control over the constabulary, for President Moncada himself insisted upon some sort of police force manned and officered exclusively by Nicaraguans. Instead of eradicating the Marine-trained organization, Moncada established a category of "Voluntarios," troops responsible to Nicaragua's Chief Executive. Naturally, they would be under the tactical control of brigade officers when operating in their field, but their existence represented some degree of emancipation from restrictions imposed by the Americans.

What plagued the Americans most was the fact that time was running out. Marines could not patrol the interior forever; this campaign had to be terminated. Unfortunately, the Marines could not be withdrawn until peace had been forced upon Nicaragua, and there could be no peace until a trained native constabulary was in the field. In order to reassume her sovereignty, Nicaragua needed a police force; the Marines could not be withdrawn before the country was able to enforce its own laws. In other words, some sort of Guardia Nacional had to be whipped into fighting

trim. The Americans themselves were in no position to argue with Moncada even though they feared that his volunteer organization might be turned into a plaything for local politicians.

Those Marines assigned to the Guardia Nacional toiled unceasingly with their occasionally troublesome charges. One serious incident, a mutiny at Somotillo in January 1928, marred the progress of their work; but investigation showed that this uprising was due to a lack of indoctrination among the Guardia stationed there.

All was going well for the Guardia when the election of 1928 rolled around. During these critical weeks, the entire force except for recruits was turned out to lend a hand policing the polls. Here, the nonpolitical indoctrination drummed into the guardsmen paid dividends. General McCoy, a man not easily pleased, was moved to commend the organization and its officers. After this interlude, training was resumed; and by the end of September 1929, three battalions, a total of 1,846 men, were under arms.

Military Operations Resume

As far as military operations were concerned, the lull ended early in January, when a band of about 100 rebels attacked a Guardia patrol led by 1st Lieutenant Chester A. Davis, GN. Near Guancastilla, Neuva Segovia, on 10 January 1929, Davis, with 2 other officers and 15 enlisted men, managed to drive off the ambush party, killing seven of them. His own losses numbered two killed and four wounded.(88)

Less fortunate was a seven-man mounted patrol led by 1st Lieutenant Alexander Galt. Pausing at the village of San Antonio, the Marines had asked a native for directions to Constancia. When the trail he pointed out came to an abrupt end in a coffee plantation, the disgruntled Marines turned around and began retracing their way to the village. They were a weary lot, some walking, others riding, none of them with weapons ready. At midmorning on 21 January, 30 rebels struck from ambush. At no cost to himself, the enemy killed 3 Marines and captured 2 rifles, 3 pistols, a submachine gun, and 400 rounds of ammunition. A relief patrol under 2d Lieutenant Marshall C. Levie arrived on the scene too late to avenge the attack.(89)

Carelessness may have taken the lives of three Marines near San Antonio; but it was the vigilance of a veteran Marine officer, 1st Lieutenant Herman H. Hanneken, that accounted for a spectacular coup, the capture of Manuel Jiron, near San Albino. Since the Marines had pitched camp on the bank of a small stream, Hanneken sent eight of his men to the creek to bathe. Fully alert to the possibility of an ambush, he saw to it that four men remained on guard while the other four took their turn in the water. At 1030, one of the sentries spotted a mounted man shambling along the bank. Immediately the Marines leaped from the water, grabbed their Springfields, and waited. Head down, half asleep, the notorious rebel wandered blindly into their midst and was taken prisoner.(90)

Although Jiron's capture raised American morale, this incident did not lead to the capture of Sandino; for the wily rebel chieftain was on his way to Mexico City to raise funds for his army. In his absence and in spite of the loss of Jiron, the rebels continued to wage a guerrilla campaign. Contacts with the enemy were numerous, but seldom were large numbers involved. Typical of rebel hit and run tactics was the ambush on 19 February of a patrol led by 2d Lieutenant Harold D. Harris. The Marines had stopped to talk with a Nicaraguan civilian living near San Antonio. The farmer assured Harris that not a single rebel lurked in the area, so the patrol pushed on. Five minutes later the enemy struck.

Surprise gave the attackers an initial advantage, but the Marines and Guardia rallied quickly. The lieutenant himself was wounded, but not before his men had built up an effective base of fire. After 22 minutes, the enemy vanished as quickly as he had come. In addition to Lieutenant Harris, two members of the Guardia were wounded, but the ambush party definitely came out second best; for 3 were killed and possibly as many as 17 wounded.(91)

Sandino's departure for Mexico had deprived the rebels of an inspirational leader. As their zeal waned, the liberators concerned themselves more and more with the difficult business of staying alive. Rather than defeat the "Yanquis," they hoped to elude the Marine patrols, steal what they needed, and somehow keep the cauldron of revolution boiling.

Moncada's Voluntarios were taking the field. For the time being, the danger inherent in this system could be forgotten for General Juan Escamilla, a militant Liberal of the Moncada faction, had proved a trustworthy leader. On the last day of February 1929, to the accompaniment of guitars and singing, the volunteers moved into the wilderness. With the 80 Nicaraguans was a Marine patrol of 3 officers, 33 enlisted, and a Navy corpsman under the command of 1st Lieutenant Hanneken. During the first phase of this expedition, 74 days on the trail, there was one casualty, a Nicaraguan wounded in the arm during an encounter with rebels near Los Cedros on 27 April. Phase two, which lasted 38 days, also resulted in but a single contact with the enemy.

Although Moncada's Voluntarios gleefully boasted that they alone could save Nicaragua from the rebels, the organization was destined to disappear before the end of the year. Conservative politicians as well as Marine officers remained convinced that these volunteers, men intensely loyal to President Moncada, would, in the event of his defeat at the polls, become his private army. True, the existence of this force allowed a reduction in Marine strength and gave the Nicaraguans themselves a greater role in restoring order to their country, but these same goals could be attained by simply increasing the strength of the Guardia. Reluctantly, Moncada yielded to the advice of the Americans, and in June 1929, further appropriations for the volunteer army were withheld.(92)

In the meantime, the Guardia was having troubles of its own. Shortly after Colonel Douglas C. McDougal assumed command of the Guardia on 11 March 1929, President Moncada began using the guard itself to consolidate his political position.

The embroilment of the Guardia in politics had immediate repercussions--a mutiny. On the morning of 6 October, at Telpaneca, malcontents faked a bandit raid and in the confusion shot and killed Lieutenant Trogler, the commanding officer. Trogler was succeeded by 2d Lieutenant Charles J. Levonski, GN. For a time all went well; but when 2d Lieutenant James C. Rimes arrived at Telpaneca with ten replacements, a second mutiny erupted. On the morning of 21 October, the two lieutenants were arrested. That night the entire command set out for Honduras. Fortunately, the two officers managed to escape with the aid of some of the replacements. In fact, all of Rimes men and some members of the original garrison made their way back to Guardia outposts. Those who escaped to Honduras were jailed for a time, but they were not returned to stand trial.(93)

In spite of its political difficulties, the Guardia was fast developing into a splendid military organization. As more and more Nicaraguans took the field, Marine Corps strength was drastically cut. By 20 August 1929, the last elements of the 11th Regiment were on their way to the United States.(94) Yet the pressure on the enemy was not releaxed. From March, when Colonel McDougal took command, until December, the Guardia took part in 22 actions, lost 3 wounded and 1 killed, while killing 35 rebels, wounding 5, and capturing 6.(95) All in all, their work was most impressive.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the year was the establishment of a road program. For a year, September 1929 to September 1930, the Guardia furnished protection for construction camps as the roads inched their way across the countryside. Thanks to this program, an investment of $150,000, many men who might have turned bandit or rebel were given a chance to earn their way. To earn 50 cents per day, 125 known Sandinistas lay down their rifles to go to work on the project at Yali.(96)

The year 1930, brought with it an increase in rebel banditry. Silencio in Neuva Segovia was the center of this new outburst, so on 5 February, patrols from Condega, Telpaneca, and Quilali were ordered to converge on the town. From 28 February, until 4 March, Marines and guardsmen scoured the area, but found no trace of the enemy. The operation dragged on into March, with an increasing number of

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minor brushes with rebel bands, but the main body of Sandinistas could not be trapped. The Marines simply did not have the necessary mobility. Although aerial supply helped, they were dependent upon pack trains for heavier items of equipment, while the rebels carried as little as they could, relying on the countryside to provide them with food.(97)

Since this ability to live off the land gave the rebels a tremendous advantage, the Marines began devising means to deprive the enemy of food. In May, the time honored policy of reconcentration was tested in the area around Ocotal. With the consent of the President of Nicaragua, the local inhabitants were ordered to leave their farms and bring their property and cattle to those protected by Marine or Guardia detachments. Anyone found roaming the countryside after 1 June would be considered a bandit. On 8 July, the experiment was quietly abandoned.(98)

A few days after reconcentration was first announced, Sandino returned from Mexico once more to take an active part in the fighting. By 19 June, he had gathered a force of about 150 men and fortified a hilltop north of Jinotega. There, Marine aircraft discovered his presence and greeted him with a shower of high explosives. A bomb fragment struck Sandino in the leg, and he was forced to retire to the wilds of the Coco Valley to recuperate.

The Marines began thrusting into the rugged mountains lying between the Coco and Bocay Rivers. Between August 1930 and February 1931, three expeditions, each made up of several closely coordinated patrols, probed the area.

Typical of the first offensive was the work of a patrol under Captain George F. Good, Jr. Posted on the left flank of the nine-patrol expedition, he was to strike southeast from the junction of the Pantasma and Coco Rivers. To accomplish this mission, he carved a trail over some of the most rugged terrain in all Nicaragua. Arriving at the base of Pena Blanca mountain, on 20 August, the patrol scaled the rugged northwest slope, a difficult task but one which paid great dividends. When he reached the summit, he was greeted by the placid strumming of guitars. A rebel camp lay a few hundred yards distant. If one of the Guardia had not been spotted by the enemy, the rebel force probably would have been wiped out. As it was, one of them was killed and the rest scattered in a ten-minute fire fight.(99)

Even more successful was Captain Lewis B. Puller, GN. With 2 other officers and 32 men, he attacked a rebel camp at Portreras on 11 September, killing three of the enemy. He also captured a store of weapons and ammunition. For these and other exploits, the indomitable Puller came to be dubbed "The Tiger of the Mountains."(100)

Far from being cowed by the intense patrolling, the rebels gamely fought back. As always, their principal weapon was the ambush. In fact, the year ended with an attack upon a party of telephone linemen repairing a break east of Ocotal. Ten Marines under Sergeant Arthur Palrang were surrounded at a point some 12 miles east of the town. Eight of them were killed; the other two, although wounded, managed to escape.(101)

January 1931 offered promise that the Marines at last would be absolved of responsibility for enforcing the peace in Nicaragua. Early that month, Secretary of State Stimson began urging an increase in the tempo of training for the Guardia Nacional. This organization would be able to assume the entire burden of maintaining order within two years. To meet this goal, an additional 500 men would be recruited, and the Guardia would be relieved of those tasks which could be carried out by local police. In other words, the organization was to throw its entire weight into an offensive against the rebels, while local police protected those places not threatened by the Sandinistas.

When presented with the blunt fact that neither the American people nor the Congress would tolerate an indefinite occupation of his nation, Moncada agreed to cooperate in strengthening both the Guardia and the police force. On 19 February, Stimson proclaimed the determination of the United States to withdraw the Marines as soon as the next Nicaraguan Chief Executive was sworn into office. In the meantime, Marine strength would be drastically reduced until, by 1 June 1931, only an instructional battalion and the aviation units were serving on Nicaraguan soil.

The Moncada government was far from pleased with the arrangement. First of all, the enlarged Guardia would cost money. Second, and far more frightening, was the fact that the revolution was not ended; nor was there any assurance that the Guardia alone could end it. Many patriotic Nicaraguans regretted the move, for they feared that innocent lives would be lost; but nothing could be done. Sooner or later, the Leathernecks had to leave.(102)

No sooner had these diplomatic problems been resolved than the Moncada government found itself face to face with another crisis--a natural disaster. At 1019 on 31 March 1931, the wooden shacks that comprised most of Managua began to tremble. Within three minutes, they lay in ruins, battered to splinters by a dozen earth tremors. Marines stationed at Managua worked with the Guardia in rescuing the injured from wrecked buildings, evacuating casualties, and caring for the homeless. Fortunately, there was water enough in the fire reservoirs to enable the Marines to save what remained of Managua from the flames. Drinking water, however, was scarce; and the spectre of typhoid loomed in everyone's mind.

As it had in the fighting, aviation played a stellar role in relief operations. On the morning of the earthquake, Marine pilots took off from the Managua flight strip to determine the extent of the shock. They discovered that Managua had borne the brunt of the tremor. Because of the damage to the engineering shops, few planes could be kept in the air; but the command was able to provide a campsite for refugees and send rescue parties into the shattered town.

On 1 April, the first plane load of medical supplies touched down on the Managua airstrip. A steady stream of aircraft, most of them carrying food or medicines, arrived throughout the day. In the meantime, the Marines themselves were flying the first of 92 relief and evacuation missions. By 4 April, they would log 88 hours flying time, carrying 129 passengers and 21,196 pounds of freight.(103)

An estimated 2000 Managuans perished in the earthquake and fire. The toll, no doubt, would have been much higher had it not been for the work of the Americans. Checking the fires, restoring order, and caring for the injured were the contributions of the Marines, Guardia, and Army Engineers.

While the world's attention had been riveted upon the tragedy at Managua, the rebels had launched another offensive, this one in eastern Nicaragua. From a base near Bocay on the Coco River, a band of about 150 rebels led by Pedro Blandon began pushing downstream toward the coast. On 11 April, a Marine-Guardia patrol was ambushed near Logtown, and Captain Harlan Pefley, commander of the Guardia at Puerto Cabezas, was killed. Two days later, with the aid of Marine aircraft, a second patrol located the enemy and attacked, killing Blandon and seven of his men. Blandon's death did not end the threat to eastern Nicaragua, for other rebel columns were drifting into the region.

Especially nervous about the bandit build up was Secretary of State Stimson, who repeatedly urged that the Marines and Guardia concentrate to parry the new thrust. El Gallo was rumored to be the objective of the rebels, so a detachment of Guardia was rushed there from Bluefields. Security of the latter town became the temporary responsibility of the Marines of the USS Sacramento, who were landed there on 18 April. Three days later, 18 Nicaraguan guardsmen were flown from Managua to Puerto Cabezas; and for the first time in weeks, Mr. Stimson could rest easy.(104)

This sudden shuffling of personnel may have discouraged the raiders; at any rate, almost a month passed before the enemy made his move. Pedron Altamirano and some 150 men suddenly materialized at the Neptune Mine on 12 May. Although ragged-looking, the men were heavily armed and well disciplined. On the 15th, the rebels marched back into the interior, taking along gold, dynamite, supplies, two new recruits, and one captive.(105)

Fighting continued in the eastern part of the country well into the autumn. Again, Marine aviators rendered outstanding service in forcing the rebels deep into the interior. On 23 July, they roared down upon a rebel encampment at Saclin, killing two of the enemy. During the attack, one plane was hit 16 times by small-arms fire. The pilot, Staff Sergeant Gordon W. Heritage, managed a crash landing; but he had to destroy the plane to prevent the enemy from salvaging its

parts. With his observer, Corporal Orville B. Simmons, he struck out for the coast. After struggling 40 miles, fording 5 rivers, and wading through trackless swamps, they reached a small village, where they were picked up and returned to Puerto Cabezas.

In November and December, when the rebels began another drive, this one in western Nicaragua, Marine pilots provided the eyes which enabled the Guardia to spy out enemy concentrations. Aerial patrols, low-level attacks, and the transporting of supplies all contributed to the success of the Guardia in scattering the rebels and forcing them to retire northward.(106)

1932

A single event dominated the Nicaraguan scene throughout 1932. This was the presidential election. Like the one of 1928, which brought Moncada to power, and the local elections of the previous year, the coming political campaign would be waged under American supervision. In charge of the Electoral Mission was Clark H. Woodward. He would be assisted by the Guardia and by an Electoral Detachment of Marines and seamen drawn from the 2d Marine Brigade, the Special Service Squadron, and the Submarine Base, Coco Solo, Panama.(107)

As had been anticipated, the approaching election was the signal for renewed efforts by Sandino's extremists to overthrow the Moncada regime. Nor was the government itself unwilling to take up the gauntlet. Indeed, during the fighting of November-December 1931, Moncada himself had taken the field to direct operations against the rebels. The last year of the occupation promised its share of bitter battles, but most of them would be fought by the Guardia and by aviation units. The Brigade itself would be concerned mainly with the election.

Gradually the tempo of warfare increased, with the Guardia performing both valiantly and effectively. April, however, proved a particularly ill-starred month for Nicaraguan soldiery. The month began with a mutiny, the eighth in the brief history of the Guardia Nacional.(108) Early one morning, Captain Orrel A. Inman, USMC, had inspected the post at Kisalaya and then left by plane for Puerto Cabezas. Private Pablo P. Salmeron was ordered confined to the brig by 2d Lieutenant Carlos Reyes. Sergeant Sebastian Jimenez sided with the malcontent. The noncommissioned officer turned out his men, issued them their weapons, and demanded the commanding officer, Lieutenant Charles J. Levonski, turn Reyes over to the mutineers. Jimenez promised that no harm would come to the American provided he allowed the men to kill Reyes. When Levonski refused to betray the young Nicaraguan, he was shot to death. Reyes was wounded; and Jimenez, who turned outlaw, was killed later that month by Guardia troops.

More shocking than mutiny was the blow which fell on 21 April. While returning from Apali to Jalapa, a Guardia patrol under 2d Lieutenant Laurin T. Covington, GN, was ambushed as it crossed a small stream. Four men were killed before Covington was able to break contact. Meanwhile, a relief column, commanded by 1st Lieutenant Laurence C. Brunton, had come to Covington's assistance. Once the two patrols had met, all seemed safe; but the enemy had moved cross-country to establish still another ambush along the road. Covington, Brunton, and Finis L. Whitehead, an officer in the Guardia's Medical Corps, were killed when the trap was sprung; and their combined patrols were routed. In that day's fighting, ten Guardia were killed.(109)

Nor did every battle that month end in defeat for the Guardia. In the wilderness northeast of Ocotal on 26 April, a 45-man Guardia patrol fought a fierce three-hour battle with Sandino's men. The rebel firebrand may have been present at the fight; if so, he escaped. Not so fortunate was his Chief Judge, Florencio Silva. When the haze of battle cleared, Silva lay dead in the underbrush.(110)

Throughout May and June, the Guardia was in almost constant contact with the enemy. A total of 32 actions were fought during this period, the most successful a coordinated land-air attack on a rebel force at Neptune Mine. This battle accounted for 17 of the 62 Sandinistas killed during these eight weeks. Guardia bullets claimed the lives of two important revolutionaries, Ezequiel Zeledon and Sebastain Caceres, the latter Sandino's Chief of Police.(111)

So splendid was this record that it offset the effect of still another mutiny, the last to occur during the occupation, which broke out at San Isidoro on 30 June. A Nicaraguan officer, Lieutenant Gonzales, had a grudge against the detachment commander, 2d Lieutenant Edward H. Schmierer, GN. Shortly after midnight, Gonzales strode into the American's quarters and shot him dead. Although they refused to participate in the crime, the Guardias passively allowed the mutineer and his four followers to ransack the armory and escape.(112)

Typical of the new spirit which had been infused into the Guardia was the work of Captain Puller's command, a mobile force operating in Jinotega. Early in September, Puller discovered a trail which seemed to be the route used by the rebels in their southward thrusts. Returning to Jinotega, he organized a strong patrol and, on 20 September, he pushed off.

A volley of rifle fire greeted the column on the morning of 26 September, as it was moving northwest from the bank of the Auyabal River. A quick charge sent the attackers scurrying, for this was merely an attempt to harass the patrol. A Lewis maching gun in the skilled hands of Lieutenant William A. Lee kept the enemy pinned down while the Guardia worked their way up the slope opposite the ambush party. When they had gained the crest, they were able to fire directly into the rebel emplacements.

Puller's men had penetrated the center of a rebel encampment, killing 16 of the enemy in the process. Although as many as 150 Sandinistas may have taken part in the action, the Guardia suffered only two killed and three wounded. To obtain medical care for his wounded, Puller immediately started back toward Jinotega. Twice the patrol was ambushed, but it suffered no further casualties. Instead, eight rebels were cut down by the gallant Guardia. On 30 September, Puller's band arrived at Jinotega.(113)

During the time that Puller and the other Marines serving with the Guardia were engaged in some of the heaviest fighting of the campaign, the officers and men of the Brigade were laying the groundwork for the November elections. Nor was this an easy task, for President Moncada had decided that he did not want the help of the Americans. In fact, Admiral Woodward felt certain that the President was toying with the idea of becoming dictator.(114)

Not even the fruits of victory would unite the Liberal Party. After months of quarreling and a primary election, the party finally settled upon Juan B. Sacasa, a well educated idealist, as candidate for President with Rudolfo Espinasa as his running-mate. The Conservatives, apparently still hoping for American aid, trotted out Adolfo Diaz, twice the American-supported President of Nicaragua, and Emiliano Chamorro. On 6 November, the Conservatives went down to defeat 76,030 to 54,487.(115)

One of the achievements of Moncada's regime had been the extension of the railway system. He wished to dedicate this new line from Leon to El Sauce before he left office, so official ceremonies were slated for 28 December. Soon, rumors were afoot that Sandino himself would blast the line to atoms and Moncada with it. The mission of guarding both the railroad and the Chief Executive fell to Captain Puller, 7 Marines, and 64 Guardias.

As the trainload of troops neared the terminus of the line, a construction camp a few miles south of El Sauce, the chatter of machine guns split the air. Juan Umanzor, with over 100 men, had been sacking the camp when the train chugged into sight. The rebels throught that it carried arms for the El Sauce garrison and promptly opened fire. When Puller's men leaped from the cars, their weapons blazing, Umanzor's troops were shocked, but they clung to their ground. Not until a flanking movement had failed--the rebels collided with a band of Guardia attempting the same maneuver and were cut to ribbons--did the enemy retreat. Thirty Sandinistas were killed in the 90-minute fight; and two days later, on the 28th as scheduled, Moncada formally opened the new rail line.(116)

The End of Intervention

All that remained was the inauguration. Juan B. Sacasa took the oath of office on 1 January 1933, and at 1700 of the following day, the last units of the 5th Regiment sailed aboard the Henderson and Antares from Corinto.(117) The Second Nicaraguan Campaign had ended.

What had the two major interventions accomplished? The first, with its lightning swift campaign, had forestalled possible European intervention and provided the republic with an opportunity to attain financial stability. Legitimate American investments, the lives and property of American citizens, all were protected. The Marine regiment had restored order quickly enough, but statesmen failed to arrive at a solution for the problems that plagued Nicaragua.

Less successful from a political point of view was the second intervention. True, the Marines had halted a bloody civil war; but they had not brought peace to the country, for Sandino's die-hards were never brought to task. Worse still, patriotic Latin Americans came to hate the United States because of its interference in Nicaraguan affairs.

Some estimate of this political failure may be gained from a glimpse at post-occupation Nicaragua. The American Marines and seamen killed in action during the campaign left behind them two great monuments, the Guardia Nacional to maintain order and an electoral law to insure honest elections. Neither survived for long.

Under the direction of its new leader, Anastasio Somoza, the Guardia became the decisive factor in Nicaraguan politics. In fact, it was the Guardia which was given the assignment of murdering Sandino after the rebel leader had been given amnesty by the Sacasa government. From Jefe of the Guardia, Somoza became President of Nicaragua in 1936. For two decades he was dictator of the country, naming Presidents, dismissing them at his whim, or ruling as Chief Executive himself. He died 29 September 1956 as a result of an assassin's bullet, to be succeeded in office by his son Luis.

From a military point of view, the Marine Corps did profit from its operations in Nicaragua. Many World War II leaders, officers such as Merritt A. Edson, Lewis B. Puller, Evans F. Carlson, Ross E. Rowell, and Christian F. Schilt, learned their tactics in the mountains and jungles of Central America. More important was the fact that Marine aviators and infantrymen functioned smoothly as a unified team. The Second Nicaraguan Campaign ended with the Marine Corps a more effective combat organization than it had been six years earlier.

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NORTHERN DEPARTMENTS OF NICARAGUA
JICARO R.
MURRA
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BOCAY R.
COCO RIVER
SAN FERNANDO
Jicaro
SAN ALBINO
MANCHONES
SAPOTILLAL
OCOTAL
GUANCASTILLA
LAS CRUCES
Quilali
NUEVA SEGOVIA
Telpaneca
SAN JUAN
COCO R.
Somoto
CONSTANCIA
SAN ISABEL
SAN ANTONIO
PANTASMA R.
YALI
Condega
ESTELI
JINOTEGA
PENA BLANCA
San Rafael del Norte
PRINZAPOLCA
Somotillo
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